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Erratum

The caption for Plate 28 in VISTAS—Vol. 1, No. 2—should include: © ARCH. PHOT., Paris/SPADEM/VAGA, New York 1981.

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VISTAS

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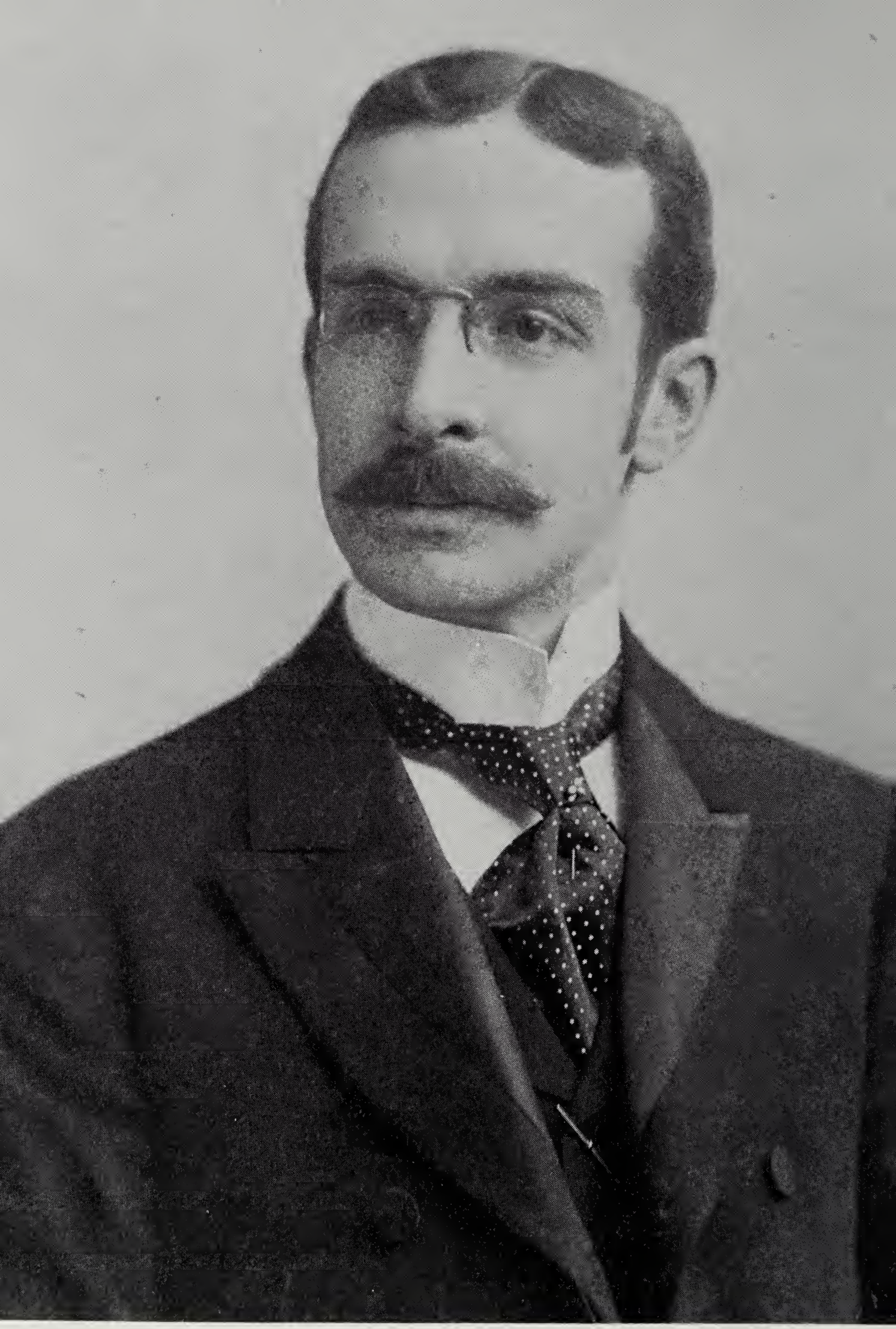
The essays, etc., appearing in the issues of this journal will, for the most part, be derived from the work of seminar students, alumni, and members of the staff of The Barnes Foundation Art Department. On occasion, we shall publish articles and pieces not directly concerned with the Foundation's philosophy but representing original work by the Art Department's students and outside contributors which the editorial staff considers to be of general interest to Vistas readers.



Albert C. Barnes
Medical student in 1896
(Founder, in 1922, of The Barnes Foundation)

VISTAS

Subject and Subject Matter

By their deeds ye shall know them

Part I*

by Violette de Mazia**

It could well be that, to some readers, our views concerning subject and subject matter will appear to be unorthodox, if not arbitrary. Be that as it may, our presentation should help to clarify much of what the creative process involves, and it has its own logical basis.

Categorically and justifiably, it can be stated at the onset that a great deal of confusion, not always recognized or admitted, exists about what the subject and the subject matter of a work of art are and about the part they play both in the artist's creative experience and in the spectator's experience of the artist's created piece. Added to this is the fact that, in the art world at large, the terms subject and subject matter are treated as if they were interchangeable, thus establishing a further impediment to the understanding of what actually takes place as the creative process occurs and of what art can and does express.

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*Some of the material in this essay was originally presented by the author in class lectures at The Barnes Foundation.

**Director of Education of The Barnes Foundation Art Department.

Not surprisingly, then, subject and subject matter, in general usage, blanket a number of dissimilar things. For some people, subject and subject matter are, for instance, to be looked for and found in the title by which a painting, a sculpture, etc., are known, whether that title originated with the artist himself or was provided by some later critic, collector, historian or incidental observer. From this point of view, the subject and/or subject matter of the painting shown on Plate 9, titled by Charles Demuth, its author, "Piano Movers' Holiday," are precisely that—a piano movers' holiday and nothing more.

An illustration of this notion of the nature of subject and subject matter is provided by the following anecdote. In the winter of 1980—not of the '20s, not of the '30s—a Barnes student visited an exhibit of contemporary paintings held at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Noticing her serious pondering of the significance of a "semi-abstract" canvas, a bystander who had conscientiously read the title spontaneously volunteered, as in an authentic act of rescue, "*There* is the soccer player. Don't you see him? *There,* at the left!" And, again, in front of another "semi-abstract" painting, "*There,* see it? That's the neck of the banjo!" The Barnes student then moved on, with her companion in tow, to another "semi-abstract," where she bravely covered the title-label affixed alongside it on the wall and challenged her would-be rescuer with "Now tell me what you see." "No way" was the brisk reply. "You need the title to see the picture." And, authoritatively summing up his position on the matter, "It's the title that gives you the clue."

The clue to what? To the subject? To the subject matter? To the meaning the painting is supposed to convey? For many of the confused onlookers, needless to say, subject, subject matter and picture meaning are all one and the same thing, a thing which without the picture's title remains forever undeciphered, unexplained—an unsolvable, hence, meaningless, puzzle.

What if the title should involve transferred values in a painting rather than point to its literal contents? "A Necklace of Boats," the title of the painting shown on Plate

63, for instance, indicates no less directly the character of a particular arrangement of things than it informs on what the things so arranged are. And "The Pearl," the name given to the still life reproduced on Plate 95, accounts not at all for the objects as such—glass items and others grouped on what might have been a glass shelf—but, rather, for the thing suggested by qualities resulting from the entire picture being bathed in a cool, gently muted, subtly iridescent luminescence and given a satiny sheen as of the orient of a pearl, all of which is abetted, albeit perhaps unwittingly, by the smoothly ongoing, slow curve of the oval shape of the painted area.

How would one determine the subject and/or subject matter of a work the title of which, for one reason or another, was changed, as of Rodin's sculpture generally known as "The Thinker" (Plate 1), which was at one time called "The Poet"? And would the subject and/or subject matter of the painting entitled "The Ocean" (Plate 64) by the artist, Abe Hankins, be something else had he, instead, named it "Construction in Blue"?

Again, for some people subject and/or subject matter are what a picture, a sculpture, etc., show that was there for the artist to look at while he made the piece, *i.e.,* the sitter, the selected fragment of landscape, the set-up still life—a position that tends to reflect the claim of the so-called non-objective artists that their paintings have no subject or subject matter, but, as Kandinsky put it, "only beauty and truth." Other people see the subject and/or subject matter in the idea, the concept, what they call "the message," of the work. To them, Picasso's "Guernica" (Plate 76) has as its subject and/or subject matter the horrors of war, and the subject and/or subject matter of Ben Shahn's "Death on the Beach" (which depicts the back of the head and shoulders of a corpse on a pebbled beach) are specified by such a phrase as "the facelessness of death and the eternity of nature." Still others equate subject and/or subject matter with the theme or dominating feature of a work. Thus, in the case of the Hankins painting called "The Ocean" (Plate 64) referred to above, its subject and/or subject matter, whatever its title might

be, would be "construction in blue"—but then so might be those of many a Cézanne, many an early Picasso and many another "blue" picture.

Similarly do some viewers confuse subject and/or subject matter with their own response to what confronts them. The large-size triptych* with its side wings closed, a finished study for which is reproduced on Plate 46, shows a compact space organization centering on two large figures on a beach. Upon opening the side wings, the viewer is so powerfully struck by the dramatic impact of the monumental scene thus revealed (Plate 61), with the heaving of its weighty figures, massive trees and rolling land, with its vast expanse across and in depth and its majestic Giorgionesque grandeur and lyricism, that he would readily understand and accept as identifying its effect such a title as, say, "The Grand Opening" or simply "Grand Opening"—this regardless of what the artist happened to have called the work. Would, should "grand opening," then, be considered the subject or subject matter of the painting? Of course not. This title, in fact, indicates nothing *of* the painting itself, but functions only as a metaphor for the feeling, the sensation engendered by the impression the painting makes on the viewer as he goes through the experience of unclosing the side wings and disclosing to himself the well-nigh startling space composition that unfolds its amplitude over and across the entire area of the three panels.

Of the misconceptions that prevail about subject and subject matter, the most common by far is that which says that these terms stand for the story told on the canvas or by the sculpture, etc., *i.e.,* what is there that we already know, what in the picture, the sculpture we can recognize of things and situations as they occur in the world, whether or not the artist looked at whatever he represented while he created his piece. And, for most of those in this vast category of viewers, when what is called the subject and/or subject matter has been seen and identified, the painting, the sculpture have been seen: the subject and/or subject

*68″ x 108″, when open.

matter are, or coincide with, what the work of art is and says. In Demuth's "Piano Movers' Holiday" (Plate 9), for example, these viewers see, and for them the painting is, a view of rooftops—the re-production of which is taken, that is, for the picture intent. Likewise, with Hankins' "The Ocean" (Plate 64), suggestions of water and of parts of a ship are detected, and it is concluded that the picture was intended to be and is a picture of a ship at sea. Or, after carefully scrutinizing a so-called non-objective painting, the viewers exclaim, "Ah, I see a little bunny" (or other creature or object)—that "ah" being the exaltation of triumph at having solved art's mystery. Or they comprehend and explain such works as Renoir's "Madame Charpentier and Her Children" (Plate 54), as it was "comprehended" and "explained" in a television program, by observing that "the children are surely miniatures of their mother" and "the dog does not mind being sat upon."

All of these varied misconceptions of art and of what the subject and subject matter are in reference to it lead to, as, in fact, they stem from and are hand-in-glove with, the widespread misconception of what an artist does and of the function and merit of art.

A few more examples may serve further to substantiate the preceding declaration. Renoir's "The Spring" (Plate 11) and Ingres' "The Spring" (Plate 10)—are their subject and/or their subject matter the same? Do Matisse's "Music Lesson" (Plate 31) and Fragonard's "Music Lesson" (Plate 67) have the same subject and/or subject matter? Suppose Matisse had called his canvas "Interior with Open Window" or "The Artist's Family," which it does represent,* and Fragonard had entitled his painting "Budding Romance." What then? In Arthur Carles' "The Marseillaise" (Plate 6), the woman symbolizing the French patriotic spirit brandishes the French flag, as she does also in Bernard Lamotte's "The Marseillaise" (Plate 7) and in Delacroix's "Liberty" (Plate 55). Do these paintings, then, have the same subject or subject matter? Some will say yes

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*Matisse's daughter Marguerite and son Pierre are at the piano; another son, Jean, is at the lower left; and Madame Matisse is sitting in the garden.

to all of these questions, some will say no, and some will hesitate to commit themselves. The point is that these viewers do not agree, they are not sure. Again, what of the three panels of Matisse's triptych "The Three Sisters" (Plate 77), on each of which panels the same three girls are portrayed? Same subject or subject matter? If we answer yes, we mean the sitters. Are we right? Are we wrong?

Obviously, the issue needs elucidation, for which purpose certain questions must be examined and answered. Is subject the same as subject matter? Does one and/or the other matter to the artist, to the spectator? If they do not and if the artist can altogether dispense with one or the other or with both of them, as the so-called non-objective painters aver, why bother with them at all? If they matter, in what way do they matter? What are they, what do they do for the artist and for the spectator?

In pursuing the question of what subject and subject matter are, we shall first need to find what they do. That is to say, we shall find that they owe their identities precisely to what, in the creative process, brings them into being and to the activities they give rise to—indeed, that they are what they are *because* of what they do: "By their deeds ye shall know them."

To simplify our task we propose to draw on our recent discussion of "Blue Still Life" (Plate 75), by Matisse.* That painting, we found, expresses in novel version such qualities as glow, vividness, drama, intensity, aliveness, and so forth. These are effects, qualities, meanings of the objective matter perceived now, here, on the canvas; they are, that is, qualities, meanings of the colors themselves and of their shapes as those shapes and colors affect each other because of their respective specific identities—the hues, their tones; the patterns of the areas they occupy; the sizes of those areas, their locations, etc.

But, besides expressing such broad human values as we noted and besides also being highly decorative by their sensuousness and the activity of their patterning, the colors and shapes supply information as to the identity of

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*Violette de Mazia, "Transferred Values: Part III," *Vistas,* Autumn–Winter, 1979–1980, The V. O. L. N. Press, Merion, Pa., pp. 26–46.

things and situations as just things and situations we may ourselves know—cloth, fruit, vase, table, and so on. And we know these things and situations and recognize them here independently of the new and specific expressive identity given them by the specific dramatically decorative relationships of the specific color units that make up the new total entity—Matisse's picture.

This recognizable aspect—"tableness," "vaseness," etc.—records the fact that such objects as table, vase, etc., had existed for the artist, and they had so existed whether they were present there and then while he painted "Blue Still Life" or had been seen and known by him at some earlier time, all together as a group or piecemeal. There is, of course, no way of ascertaining which was the case, nor is it important to know, for neither the presence nor the absence of the objects while the artist paints is a *sine qua non* of creativity. Indeed, no one way of doing (working either with or without the objects present) should be established as a working rule: the choice is a personal matter, and it will be affected also by circumstances, traditional and other. The Byzantine artists, for example, were not permitted, on religious grounds, to paint holy figures as they might have observed human beings to look, but were required to present traditional symbolic types (compare, for example, the treatment of faces, hands and drapery folds in Plates 2, 3, 4 and 5, as traditions developed and changes in attitude caused the religious restrictions and the limitations imposed by them to be gradually lessened and finally eliminated).

Moreover, with such paintings as Botticelli's "The Birth of Venus" (Plate 60), Matisse's "The Dance" (Plate 70), Renoir's "Bathing Group" (Plate 57),* as in innumerable

*In the case of Renoir's "Bathing Group," an interesting episode confirms our reasonable assumption: one day at The Barnes Foundation we were talking to a visitor, the French artist Stella Mehrtens, in the gallery where "Bathing Group" hangs, when she suddenly broke off the conversation, dashed over to the painting and, excitedly pointing at figure after figure, exclaimed, *"Ça c'est moi! Ça c'est moi! Ça c'est moi!"* ("That is me! That is me! That is me!"). As a young girl living with her parents, who were neighbors of Renoir at Cagnes, she had been asked by the artist to pose for him for each of the figures in "Bathing Group" and in two other paintings of bathers (Plates 59 and 56), which, incidentally, as, with renewed excitement, she discovered, are also in The Barnes Foundation collection.

other instances in the traditions—a Crucifixion (*e.g.,* Plate 12), a Pietà (*e.g.,* Plate 66), an Annunciation (*e.g.,* Plate 48)—there is no question about whether or not all the perceptible things were there at one time while the artist worked on his picture. In the case of Van Gogh's "Thatches in the Sunshine (Reminiscence of the North)" (Plate 49), the painting was done at Arles, in the South of France, in 1888, but reverts to houses seen by the artist during his early years in Holland. And, whether Rousseau had or had not at one time been in Mexico, his jungle scenes (*e.g.,* Plate 8) were painted in cozy Montmartre. Cézanne, on the other hand, needed what he called his "motif"—the still life, the landscape—to be there for him to see as he worked, although, because of a peculiar fear he had of people "getting their hooks into" him, he did not use posing figures, except in the case of portraits and early art-school studies.

In contrast to Cézanne's and others', many a Chinese art student's training consists in great part in having to observe for an hour or longer the fish in the bowl, the bamboo bending in the wind, etc., and then removing himself from the scene to draw or paint his picture. Although this practice, employed also in some art classes nowadays, here and elsewhere, can be a profitable exercise in concentration and observation, it by no means represents the "best" way of doing.

The point of the matter about all this is that the difference in the nature of what occurs when figure, cloth, table, fruit, etc., are there and when they are not is a difference in degree rather than in kind: the same sorts of activities take place in either case. Whether the fragment of life is present at the time of painting or was present on a previous occasion, all at once or piecemeal, the artist's perception of its significance to him in any instance undergoes the effect, is subjected to the action upon it, of, among other things, his memory of it. Stated differently, what the artist looks at now or has looked at in the past is committed to and then recalled from his memory; and, in the intervening time, his feelings, his interest, his background knowledge, his imagination, his entire personality

have a chance to affect his perception of it and, in turn, to be acted upon, affected, by it.

It is objectively demonstrable that when one paints, *i.e.*, when one puts paint on the canvas, one does not look at, one does not see, the table, fruit or whatever,* but looks at, sees, the canvas and one's own dabs, and sees in memory only what one *recalls* that he saw of interest in table, fruit, etc., a second or two ago—as he took his eyes away from the canvas and looked at the objects—or at some earlier time, in a single place or in a variety of places. Thus, however it happen, the visual aspects of the objects have been with the painter, have been a part of him; and they have been subjected to the effect of his visual observation, of his visual memory, of his interests and feelings and also of that part of his background aroused by associations these recalled aspects generate and the effect of transferred values. The visual aspects registered are affected, too, as the painter recalls them for his canvas, by the workings of his imagination and intelligence, now directed by the purpose, the point, of creating the particular painting.

The difference, then, between painting with or without the presence of the fruit, the table, etc., is a matter of the length of time that elapses between the seeing of what will be recalled and the recalling as the picture is being painted. In the time interval, whether it be a split second or years, the outside stimulus is held in and has a chance to sink in, to be mulled over, digested, and not only to be modified as it is adapted to serve the painting's purpose, but to act upon, affect, the artist himself and to re-direct the intent of his picture. His having seen one thing may change his ideas about another: Matisse, having seen markets, bazaars, Cézanne's paintings, Gauguin's, etc., qualified his perception of fruit on table, which is to say

*The Kimon Nicolaides method, which suggests that the artist look at the objects, not at his canvas or paper, while he lets his brush, pen or pencil move on that canvas or paper, applies to the delineating of outline only and not to the rendering of areas or of modelling—the doing of which would, of course, not be possible.

that what he took in as he looked at these objects had the opportunity in the intervening time to be seen in new perspective, to qualify his interest or purpose in that particular picture. That is also why he can have looked at, for instance, the same screen while working on "Blue Still Life" (Plate 75) and while working on "Girl and Screen" (Plate 87), the same two girls and still life objects in front of an open window when involved in a series of paintings, two of which are shown on Plates 38 and 39, the same piece of sculpture when he did "Interior with Goldfish" (Plate 21) and "Music Lesson" (Plate 31) and have come up with different picture meanings. On each occasion, the fragment of life underwent, as it was subjected to, the effect of Matisse's interest, etc., then and there, so that what the hand performed served a present creative idea, rather than merely carrying out a mechanical process of re-producing as accurately as technical proficiency makes possible a fixed image seen, memorized and recalled for the nonce. Nor does the hand of any painter, if he functions as an artist and not as a picture-making machine, perform in that mechanical way.

From these observations, we might be tempted to conclude that it would be better not to have the table and fruit there and to allow a longer time to elapse for the sake of a more prolonged effect of one's personality. It can, to be sure and as we observed, be useful as an exercise, and it is particularly useful for those who register everything and fail to grasp essentials, but it is not a method to be established as a must-do rule, for there are an infinite variety of personalities and, therefore, of ways of reacting and of doing.

Renoir and Matisse are both examples of creative perception. Renoir grasped the essentials quickly and as quickly made them be what he wanted. With Matisse, however, the picture usually resulted from a long period of gestation, his experience ripening in the absence of the original objective stimulus and after a series of experiments, mental as well as on canvas. "The Dance" (Plate 70), for instance, the murals Dr. Barnes had commissioned Matisse to do for the Foundation's main gallery, took him

two years to complete;* the figures and all the other units underwent numerous and radical changes, and no sitter posed continuously, or, perhaps, at all, as he worked. And, of Cézanne—an example of imaginative perception, too—as we remarked earlier, he had to, needed to, be *"sur le motif"* ("on the spot" of the landscape or in front of the still life), *i.e.,* to have the things there.†

The academic, the non-imaginative, does not, cannot, escape the effect of the interval of time between registering outside facts and painting the picture any more than the creative painter can; but he, the academic, concentrates on countering its possible advantages from the standpoint of art by disciplining himself to transmit the eye report to the hand in as direct a fashion as possible, allowing as little of his personality as he can to get hold, on the way, of that eye report. For the artist, in contrast, attention is, of course, focussed, consciously to whatever extent, on the nature of what happens between seeing and expressing.

With this much set out, we have taken the first step towards identifying subject and subject matter, and we shall move further on our quest by re-connecting with what we noted in Matisse's "Blue Still Life" (Plate 75) and by what we shall now note in other paintings of his in which, as in "Blue Still Life," the units that make up the painting also say, as part of their total meaning, table, fruit and such—*i.e.,* objects of what we recognize as and term still life.

For many of us, the paintings we shall consider are all alike because they all say still life, or mainly inanimate

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*Matisse himself was aware of the importance to him of the long gestation period, as the following anecdote illustrates. The summer after Dr. Barnes commissioned Matisse, which occurred in January 1931, we met the artist in Paris, at which time he joined our group on our visits to the galleries and museums. One day, as Matisse was strolling with us, Dr. Barnes, jestingly chiding him, said, "Well, Matisse, what are you doing here? You're supposed to be in Nice working on the murals." Matisse retorted, "Oh, I'm working on them all the time."

†Cézanne is quoted as having said that his ambition was to paint as Poussin painted, but from nature *("sur le motif")* rather than completing in the studio sketches made in the landscape.

objects. For others, they are all different from each other because the recognizable objects in them are, for the most part, not the same. To those of us who know something about what makes up a work of art, the paintings combine a basic similarity—which is to the credit of the artist, since it reveals a consistency of personality rather than of represented objects—and radical differences—also to the artist's credit, for those differences disclose a fertile imagination, one to which the facts of still life, which might even have been the same, were subjected. Indeed, of Matisse, as we pointed out in our previous essay,* the characteristics of his pictures are also the characteristics of his career: a Matisse effect, not necessarily richer in contents or higher in aesthetic achievement or more refined in its technique, recurs, but not what creates that effect.

Our specific interest at this time in pointing out a few of the salient features in paintings by Matisse in which still life objects can be recognized is in discovering what those objects have become and are here, now, as a result of the particular imaginative perception they were subjected to each time they were used. "Dinner Table" (Plate 69) was painted in 1897, when Matisse was twenty-eight years old. The objects depicted in it are close to, in terms of sharing features with, objects we have known, as the picture itself is close to the work of some of Matisse's predecessors—*i.e.,* to picture effects already expressed and known—such as "The Vuillard Family at Lunch" (Plate 68), by Vuillard, "The Bar at the Folies Bergère" (Plate 74), by Manet, Monet's "Breakfast" (Plate 13), Renoir's "Luncheon of the Boating Party" (Plate 84) and even Renoir's less complex "Luncheon" (Plate 82), in all of which the artists' interest was focussed on a compact organization of many objects readily identifiable by their individual shapes, surfaces and textures—the shiny metals, the glittering glass, and such. In this respect, still lifes of Chardin and of seventeenth-century Dutch painters are also recalled.

In contrast to the elaborate picture presentation of "Dinner Table," "Small Jar" (Plate 71), done by Matisse in

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**Ibid.,* pp. 35–36 ftn.

1898, stars but a single performer. Correspondingly, the interest has shifted from a description of textures and surfaces to the picture makeup itself, which, overall, is a twinkly vibration of contrasting color dabs animating a broadly patterning framework of a few areas or planes that set off the forward-bulging volume of the jar. As such, "Small Jar" reflects a creative merging of, an instance of transferred values from, Impressionism, specifically of its technique of individually perceptible, small strokes, and Cézanne, specifically of his compositional pattern of planes. The colors, however, and their relationships already point to Matisse's developing attraction to their exotic possibilities—here evident in the light greenish-blue in the highlighted area of the jar, in its juxtaposition to pink and purplish blues and in the yellows and greens of the tabletop as that area is contrasted to the adjoining background areas dominatingly of dark green and red.

In "Still Life with Melon" (Plate 73), of 1905–06, around the same time that Matisse painted "The Joy of Life" (Plate 65), the dabs or small spots of color that were seen to quiver within each area of "Small Jar" (Plate 71) have been enlarged into vigorously applied brush strokes. Disposed in small groupings within which there is slight or no color contrast, these brush strokes directly contribute to constructive planes that function as modelling facets—as, for instance, the yellow and green areas that build up the piece of fruit on the plate at the right. This change of emphasis from one of a color vibration within areas to one of a staccato beat of rugged color patches and of planes that build solid volumes and set up dynamic relationships among them, together with the dark band-outline that Matisse incorporates in this painting, indicates a slightly different use of Cézanne, this time recalling the characteristic dynamic organization of some of Cézanne's space composition (*e.g.,* Plate 72).

With all its debt to Cézanne's ideas, "Still Life with Melon" omits a great deal of what is to be found in that artist's work, as it does, likewise, of what is known to belong to the objects it refers to: in place of Cézanne's full-bodied three-dimensionality, for instance, and of the

objects' complete factual identity, Matisse constructs a dramatic set of color units, many of them outlined in a broken border of black, that organize in an interlocking of two color themes. One of these, preponderantly pearly blue-green, enters the scene, as it were, from the window at the left and encompasses the table area and the objects upon it, save for the large dark vase and the red cloth below it at the left. This vase-and-cloth unit belongs to the second theme, that of saturated reds, dark browns and yellows—characteristic of this, Matisse's Fauve, period—which acts to enframe and forcefully to set off the light color theme as the succession of dark areas moves around the light-colored region. From the large vase and the cloth below it, the dark travels to the right below the tabletop, to the deep space in the corner at the lower right, up and over to the large area at the top, to and at the edge of the statuette, where, in its relationship to the large dark vase, it narrows as it accentuates the path of entry of the contrasting color theme before the latter expands and spreads over the other still life objects and the tabletop. The large, vigorously sweeping strokes of yellow and red at the upper right of the canvas reinforce, by their own direction, the direction that the enframing darks take at that part of the setting.

Of "Flowers in Pitcher" (Plate 19), painted in 1908, one year later than "Blue Still Life" (Plate 75), we might say—as we could have said also of "Still Life with Melon" in our discussion above—that it is a Matisse decorative translation of a typical Cézanne statement. Yet, for all that, the two Matisse paintings are far from being alike or mere repetitions of a same effect. Cézanne's contributions (*e.g.*, Plate 42) to "Flowers in Pitcher" are readily seen in the small areas of parallel brush strokes that facet, as they model, the pitcher, in the small planes that slice up, as they establish, the space in which the objects are set and in the dark, banded outline of the pitcher and of the supporting plane at its base. Nothing, however, of Cézanne's weightiness and three-dimensional solidity is present. Instead, Matisse's concern with the sensuousness of color and its decorative patterns comes to the fore. The patches and

facets and the band-outline, yes, draw, model and set things in space, but it is their acidic greens, saturated purples, brownish reds, yellows, coral-orange, etc.—the overall exotic character of the color scheme—that catch the spectator's eye and stimulate his mind.

In addition to Cézanne, "Flowers in Pitcher" draws on other sources in the traditions: from Manet (*e.g.*, Plate 18) come its flattened, simplified units, its descriptive brush strokes and its general directness of expression; from the Impressionists comes its flood of light; from Japanese woodcut prints of the nineteenth century come its exotic hues and contrasts—with all these borrowings modified so as to serve as means to the artist's own purpose and merging into a new, distinctively Matisse expressively decorative entity.

One such modification that lends individuality to this still life is Matisse's treatment of space. The pitcher, decentered towards the left, creates a tension with the bunch of dark flowers that pulls upward and to the right. At the same time, the pitcher itself is more or less secured in the containing space that surrounds it, just as that space appears in its own right to be enclosed by the long, bent leaves which act, in their holding-in effect, much as do the wires of a cage, but here with the added attraction of variety in their shapes, sizes and colors and in the spider-like character of their combined pattern and the dramatic coming-through out of the "cage" of the pitcher's handle. Definitely a Matisse still life and as definitely one with a Matisse combination of features that has not occurred earlier in his work and is not to occur again in the rest of his career.

Of special relevance to our general point concerning subject and subject matter is Matisse's "Dinner Table—Harmony in Red" (Plate 85), also known as "Red Room," of *c.* 1909, in which a number of the objects shown, as well as the overall *mise-en-scène,* are easily recognizable as having been used in previous paintings of his: the set-up table, the particular carafes and the two-tiered compote-vase are from his "Dinner Table" (Plate 69) of 1897; the patterned tablecloth is the *toile de Jouy* seen in his "Blue Still Life"

(Plate 75), of 1907. The novel picture interest led, however, to a novel rendering of the objects depicted and of their organization. It is, for instance, no longer the glint of glass or the texture of other objects that engrossed the artist, but, rather, the well-marked shapes and the patterning of flat yellows, greens, etc., on the large red area of the table. The table itself, despite the linear demarcations of its back and right edges, is made to appear as a vertical plane that is continuous with, in color and patterning, the plane of the wall—an ingenious adaptation of the distorted perspective seen in Japanese woodcuts (*e.g.,* Plate 14) and Hindu-Persian miniatures (*e.g.,* Plate 15). As in these, in the Matisse the distortion gives the bizarre, ambivalent impression that the objects are, at one and the same time, perpendicularly set on their supporting plane (floor or tabletop) and also parallel to, as well as part of, the two-dimensional pattern that decorates, it.

The patterning motifs on the tablecloth and wall—the basket and twigs—in the Matisse, well defined in their predominantly sinuous shapes and positive in their varied blue tones, give the appearance of being detached from their own red ground and suggest in this effect and in their decorative arabesques an affinity with Japanese woodcut prints of the nineteenth century (*e.g.,* Plate 14), rather than with the detached volumes, with their more emphatically expressive character, to be seen in the draperies of Tintoretto (*e.g.,* Plate 43) and Cézanne (*e.g.,* Plate 72).

To carry out his highly decorative theme in "Dinner Table—Harmony in Red," Matisse in this instance invested the cloth and objects with new qualities not just once, but two or three times: this canvas was first done—with minor differences in drawing and organization—as "Dinner Table—Harmony in Blue," over which the artist painted the now-to-be-seen "Harmony in Red" and under which, it has been said, a green version of the composition lies. The original objects in the green, the blue and the red versions were the same identifiable objects; they were not, however, the same in the matter—the green, the blue, the

red pigment, etc.—that each time made them up and gave them their distinctive identity.

The figure in "Dinner Table—Harmony in Red" hardly, if at all, detracts from the total still life character of the composition. Treated as a silhouetted shape or plane of dark and of light areas with curving outline, it counterbalances, in its location, the curved shapes of the light-colored trees and house silhouetted against the dark area of the lawn shown at the window at the upper left. Indeed, the figure is, in effect, but one more still life object, a cardboard effigy, perhaps—which, of course, it was not, but which it became as Matisse, in the process of painting the picture, discovered the need for such a two-dimensional, patterning representation.

A corresponding statement can be made about the figures in Matisse's "The Artist's Family" (Plate 93), of 1911. Stiffly rigid as they are, these figures could have been wooden mannequins or chessmen set here and there in the checkerboard-like room as simply components of an overall still life organization. With the exception of the figure at the upper left of the canvas, which by its own pattern joins in the sequence of variedly decorated areas around it, the figures have become broadly simplified and unpatterned areas that play, as do also the fireplace and the horizontal oblong above the mantel, a kind of counter-theme of pauses and reliefs to the rhythmic sequence of actively decorated areas lining up vertically, area atop area, from bottom to top. This allover sequence of decorated areas—an adaptation of the distorted perspective encountered in Oriental decorative pictures (*e.g.,* Plates 14 and 15)—gives the character of a Persian rug or of an enlarged Hindu-Persian miniature (*e.g.,* Plate 15) to the entire surface of the canvas.*

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*The treatment of the setting as a more or less continuous plane is another of the recurring features in Matisse's work that is, in each recurrence, transformed and made unique by each new picture idea it serves. In the aforementioned "Dinner Table—Harmony in Red" (Plate 85), for instance, it sets the stage for the unusual relationship between the objects and their setting above noted. Here, in "The Artist's Family," a corresponding distortion in perspective serves

In 1911, Matisse painted two companion pieces entitled "Studio" (Plate 81) and "Red Studio" (Plate 83). For these, the various items of still life were so altered by the effect upon them of the artist's interest in each picture that they enter as units in a dramatically decorative interplay of large fields of color, plain and patterned—the "plain and print" contrasts characteristic of Japanese woodcuts (*e.g.*, Plate 14). With the painting reproduced on Plate 83, the sheetlike setting of the Orientals (*e.g.*, Plate 14) reappears, and the continuous vertical plane is essentially an area of color against which primarily decorative units are set. In "Red Studio," the pattern thus set off by the angular geometry of the picture elements creates an effect that makes us think of Mondrian, without Mondrian's severity and rigidity, however, because of the light, dancing rhythm of its distribution over the canvas, which suggests the whimsy of Klee. In "Studio," on the other hand, the salient feature, apart from the "plain and print" motif, is the punctuation of the foreground area by a "push-into" unit akin in its dramatic effect to the unit of the road in Cézanne's "Mont Ste-Victoire and Road" (Plate 80).

Objects of still life such as goldfish bowl, with or without long- and narrow-necked vase, terra-cotta statuette of a

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to close up the recession near the foreground and to tilt the normally horizontal plane or planes into a vertical position. It thereby provides an upright sequence of flat area above flat area, all on the same vertical plane and each contrasting with the others as to basic color and internal patterning, for an overall display of a variety of ornamental motifs. It should be mentioned that this treatment of perspective is not to be confused with the sheetlike setting of Velásquez and Manet (*e.g.*, Plates 16 and 17), in whose work the distorted perspective serves the purpose of silhouetting a foreground figure and setting it in subtly receding space.

The idea behind the distortion of perspective as described above in Velásquez, Manet and the Orientals corresponds to that of the modern photographer when, for *his* reasons and effects and in *his* manner of doing, he, too, eliminates the "horizon line," causing the main object to appear to exist in infinite space all around it (*e.g.*, Plate 50). Interestingly, what the photographer of Plate 50 in actuality did—he hung a large sheet of single-toned, pliable cardboard behind the object and, as the cardboard reached the "horizon line," curved (not folded or creased) it forward and slid it under the object and on to the horizontally flat foreground—Matisse, in principle, also did, whether in actuality or in imagination, but with, in his case, decoratively patterned and colored draperies, cloths, carpets or other textiles (*e.g.*, Plate 102) in place of the uniform, monochrome cardboard.

reclining figure (sculpted by Matisse), an open door or window and a large tabletop, occur again and again in Matisse's paintings done in 1911 and 1912 (*e.g.*, Plates 20, 21 and 26), but each object, although identifiable as the object it was, is, on each occurrence, in consequence of having undergone the effect of Matisse's needs in his carrying out of the particular picture's intent, a new thing and a specific picture unit as it was given proportions, shape, color, etc., it, possibly, did not originally have and assigned a different rôle to fulfill. Thus it is, for instance, that the goldfish bowl in "Goldfish" (Plate 26), of 1911, provides, by its central placement, its vivid color notes and its set of oval planes, a focus for the deployment throughout the rest of the picture of curvilinear rhythms of greens and lavenders and rose and grays that lead the viewer's eye upward and downward and around the surface of the canvas, rather than into space of any appreciable degree of depth. The composite of large patterning motifs creates an allover decoration of light units set off by dark units and, alternately, of dark units set off by light ones. Fabrics like cretonnes of the sort shown on Plate 91 come to mind, and the characteristic effect of their large-size motifs is readily transferred in our perception of this Matisse organization.

Also of 1911 is the Matisse canvas usually titled "Goldfish and Sculpture" (Plate 20). Here, however, the picture idea is not centered on the decorative impact of large patterning areas involving the entire surface of the canvas, but on the activity of color contrasts and of curvilinear against rectilinear elements, in which activity the fishbowl participates. This color-and-line activity is concentrated at the middle and upper center of the composition and led into by the obliquely set terra-cotta sculpture at the lower right. With all the vividness of the color of the fish and of the flower, delicacy prevails, and a filminess, as of a gauzy, lacy curtain, is conveyed—an effect in great part due to the thin, almost washlike, application of the paint and the large expanse of the blue surround, which, despite the linear demarcation of the table edges, links table front, tabletop and wall into a single "sheet" or plane in a manner not unlike that which we

noted in Matisse's "Dinner Table—Harmony in Red" of *c.* 1909, shown on Plate 85. The total composition suggests the transferred value of a transparent patterned textile hanging down from the top of the canvas.

The outside stimulus—what we recognize as objects of still life—in "Goldfish and Sculpture" reappears in rather similar space relationships in Matisse's "Interior with Goldfish" (Plate 21), produced a year later. But now what earlier was a compact and centered grouping together of tabletop, statuette, dish, vase with flowers, fishbowl, open door, suggestion of outside landscape and shelf and picture on the wall has become part of an expanded context that includes, in addition, table front and legs, easel, cloth, paintings, window, all in a depth of space and with a sense of roominess throughout. As a result, the objects themselves, though still recognizable as from the 1911 composition, are, in the later version, made to contribute to a quite different picture motivation. They are, to begin with, members of a larger cast and share with the rest of the participants, with which they are practically on a par from the standpoint of importance, the more complex functions that the overall design requires. An angular geometry dominates the layout, and the contrasts among the rectilinear elements and between these and the curvilinear features are forcefully stated—an effect more subtly rendered in "Goldfish and Sculpture," wherein the rectilinear elements serve, rather, as units of gentle contrast to the curvilinear motifs. Further, each area of "Interior with Goldfish" is emphasized in its shape and its color, occasionally by direct contact with adjacent areas and, more generally, by a broad, black outline that underscores the geometric buildup of the picture's framework—evidence of an influence at this period of the geometry of Cubism on Matisse's work.

Distinctive of "Interior with Goldfish," too, is the bold and bizarre drama of two contrasting color themes—one of deep, weighty colors, thick of pigment, such as brown, green and semi-translucent blues with transferred values from early stained glass, and the other, fresh and bright, more lightly brushed on and in a high key. This idea of

two contrasting color themes harks back to Matisse's "Still Life with Melon" (Plate 73), of 1905–6, but is imbued, now, with new meaning. For one thing, the contrasts in each of these two pictures differ from each other by their very color components. In addition, the contrasting themes in "Interior with Goldfish" play out a powerful staccato relationship of color against color, while those in "Still Life with Melon" are, as we observed, decidedly interlocking. Similarly of the "sheet" idea that is resorted to in the treatment of space in both "Interior with Goldfish" and "Goldfish and Sculpture," almost the opposite effect is accomplished in each: with "Goldfish and Sculpture," foreground and background are pulled, as it were, onto a single foreground plane, becoming, in effect, a curtain on which and against which the still life objects are set; with "Interior with Goldfish," the "sheet" of floor and wall works in direct conjunction with the perspective of the linear pattern, creating a spacious roominess in depth and which, in turn, is aided and abetted by the forceful linear perspective of the unit of the table leg right of lower center, which projects into *our* space in the front.

Besides the transferred values already noted of stained glass and of Cubism, "Interior with Goldfish" carries us back also to the simplifications of Manet and the inner luminosity of his color, to the geometry of Cézanne's compositions, to the fresh, high-key color of the Impressionists, to the plastic line of Daumier and to the space recession, by way of the sheet-setting, of Velásquez, Manet and the Orientals.

"The Blue Window" (Plate 40), painted by Matisse in 1912, again refers us to "Goldfish and Sculpture," specifically in that the keynote to the color scheme in both pictures is a light, delicately transparent and luminous blue that spreads over large areas of the canvas.* The perspective of "The Blue Window," also not unlike that of

* It could be that the trees in "The Blue Window" were originally done in green, as some green paint shows around their edges—an adjustment of the matter of the picture not unlike that which Matisse made with his changes of the color scheme of "Dinner Table—Harmony in Red" (Plate 85), discussed earlier.

"Goldfish and Sculpture," is distorted so as to give to its blue a backdrop effect of a sort, against which and yet also within the space it suggests are played vari-toned circular and angular blue shapes and contrasting greens, yellows and reds. But so radically distorted is the perspective of "The Blue Window" that it is a question whether the entire blue setting represents a window with a landscape seen through it and with reflections of colorful objects that were in front of it or whether the horizontal blue oblong in the lower third of the canvas was a tabletop on which the still life items were placed. If the latter is the case, what, then, of the oddly-shaped vase at the extreme left silhouetted against the broad, vertical band that extends from top to bottom, which band, definitely not a part of the "tabletop," could represent, but for the placement of the vase, an element in the framework of the window?

Some of the still life objects in "The Blue Window" and the "tabletop" are presented as from a ceiling view, which plunging perspective assists in diminishing their three-dimensionality and in stressing their silhouetted shapes that, together with the equally well-defined shapes of trees, house and cloud in the landscape, are set against and pattern the pale blue setting. Thus do they, at one and the same time, enter into and slice up the receding space. Simultaneously with these effects, there is a sense of levitation given the still life objects, as if the lamp, vases, plate, etc., were *above,* rather than actually *on*, the would-be tabletop. And, were it not for the pinning down action of the dark, vertical tree trunks and the vertical border-band along the left edge of the composition, the still life and the trees, house and so on would seem to be floating weightlessly in free space.

Also to the year 1912 belongs Matisse's "Still Life with Bust" (Plate 36). A casual glance at this picture discloses little or nothing in common with the other paintings of that year or earlier that we have just considered (Plates 19, 20, 21, 26, 69, 71 and 73). On closer examination, however, we shall find a picture idea in this canvas that engrossed Matisse in previous works and continued to do so, now and again, throughout his career—namely, the

idea or principle of organizing the color composition on the basis of a dramatic interplay and orchestration of two distinct, contrasting color themes. In "Still Life with Bust," these color themes consist of the set of "neutral" or "colorless" grays and blacks and the set of bright greens and reds and delicate pinks, greens, tans and blues—an odd contrast and daring in its deviation from traditional expectations of color harmony, as it is, likewise, in the other Matisses in which the same principle obtains.

In "Still Life with Bust," as in the other paintings referred to, the dramatic confrontation of the two color themes is reconciled by the interrelationships of their respective color shapes. That is to say, color and/or shape belonging to one theme are set off by or participate in a rhythm of color and/or shape belonging to the contrasting theme. In "Still Life with Bust," moreover, the reconciliation is achieved also by another dominant factor—the black arabesque area-lines*—that involves and affects the two adversary themes.

The black in "Still Life with Bust" is assertive both as a linear patterning of the composition and as a color positive in its own right and materially influencing the identity of other colors. The pale blue of the plate at the right corner of the table, for instance, and the light tan of the pieces of fruit on it have each a positive color identity and, for all their paleness and delicacy, a pronounced degree of luminosity—thanks to the effect on them of the deep, lustrous, saturated black that outlines and surrounds them. Eliminate this black (see Plate 37), and the blue of the plate and the tan of the fruit level off with each other in tonality and almost also in color, and the luminosity they have when in contact with the black is now entirely compromised.

In its own lustrous quality and also in the effect just described that it exerts on the color and on the luminosity of areas adjacent to it, Matisse's black in "Still Life with Bust" parallels that in Manet's early work (*e.g.,* Plate 78)

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* An area-line is a linear element which, because of its width, partakes somewhat also of the nature of an area.

and in some of the prints by Japanese woodcut artists, notably Sharaku (*e.g.,* Plate 51) and Utamaro (*e.g.,* Plate 35).

The general nature of the subdued colors in Matisse's "Still Life with Bust" comes, by and large, from the grays and tans of Cubism, as does, likewise, the slicing up of volumes into planes, such as happens, for example, in the rendering of the tabletop: Matisse spells it out, so to speak, and gives it to us piecemeal—"t-a-b-l-e-t-o-p," instead of "tabletop." In this adaptation of the Cubists' principle of dismembering three-dimensional units into planes, Matisse simplifies the number of the planes (here, two or three) and retains a parallel direction among them. Moreover, in the area that "spells out" tabletop, some of the parallel planes are defined by a black outline, with which outline none of the boundaries of the color planes that make up the tabletop coincides. This, naturally, initiates a dynamic picture activity, a pull, a tension between color area and black outline—a way of doing which became a kind of trademark in the work of Raoul Dufy (*e.g.,* Plate 98) and which anticipated what Picasso did in some of his paintings of the early 'twenties (*e.g.,* Plate 47).

Moving on to 1916 with "Still Life with Lemon" (Plate 79), we find yet another innovation in Matisse's adaptation of the "sheet" setting. Here, instead of the familiar lining up of the horizontal foreground plane with the vertical plane of what would have been wall, it is the latter which yields its verticality to the horizontality of the slightly tilted plane supporting the objects. Continuity of the tan color through the areas of tabletop and wall, together with the faintness of demarcation at the line where these two planes meet, is the main factor responsible for the new effect created. And the effect is further reinforced by the fact that the broad, dark shadow cast on the tabletop at the right, the plate, the spoon and the various shapes in the tumbler indicating base and rim and water level and reflections in it combine into a ladder-like set of planes that parallel the horizontality of the tabletop and overlap the area that would have been wall.

The color scheme of "Still Life with Lemon," dominated

by black and tan and dramatically punctuated by the greenish yellow of the lemon and by stark conjunctions of light and dark, is strongly reminiscent of that in Manet's work, as, for example, his "Torrero Saluting" (Plate 17) and "Men Tarring Boat" (Plate 78). The broadly simplified drawing and expressively descriptive brush work of Manet, which are in evidence also, satisfy, in the Matisse, the demands of an accentuatedly decorative intent, a decorative theme that relies for its effect not on brightness or sensuousness of color, but on a series of determined, patterning shapes—the shadow cast on the table, for instance, the corolla-like plate, the patches of light and of dark in the glass and the spoon and the color facets in the lemon—within a relatively subdued color scheme.

Objects not unsimilar to those shown in "Still Life with Lemon" occur in the still life grouping at the lower right of the left panel of Matisse's triptych "The Three Sisters" (Plates 77 and 45), of 1916, the same year "Still Life with Lemon" was done. Tumbler is now goblet, and plate has been replaced, perhaps, by doily, but lemon and spoon are there and also the tablet-like highlight within the spoon. Patterns, however, are less emphatic, and contrasts of light and dark shapes, too, so that the entire still life is allowed to function more directly as a lighted, almost white, area which, in combination with the vertical legs of the tabouret beneath it, continues the downward movement of the dark leg and tresses of the broadly simplified white-robed figure above it. This helps to establish in that area of the triptych a balance of equivalents with the linear framework of the legs and the area of the back of the armchair at the left in the right-hand panel. Different intent from that of "Still Life with Lemon," different use of similar objects, and different character of color, of light and of shape given them each time—an observation worth our while to stress again for its direct relevance to the overall concern of this essay on subject and subject matter.

When we reach 1918, the year of Matisse's "Red Rug" (Plate 25), we have reached into the first part of the artist's stage of development usually referred to as his "Nice"

period, which began when he took up residence at Nice and was affected, as his work done there reveals, by the Riviera's ambiance—its colors, its luminosity, its pearly, wet atmosphere.

The objects of still life in "Red Rug"—rug, armchair, wardrobe, chair, door, stack of canvasses,* violin case, bench with row of paintbrushes—which enframe the figure and are subsidiary to it as far as size and prominence are concerned, fulfill an uncommonly interesting function in the expressive, plastic activity of the total setup. Not only do they, among themselves, play dynamically against each other's main plane, but they also cut, so to speak, or mark off, a certain shape on the rug, making it echo, in the varied projections thereby effected, the general shape and projections of shoulder, elbow, feet of the figure. And both of the figure's feet, fulfilling the part of still life items in the corner empty of such items, enter into the sequence of the still life objects revolving around the room and extend the circular activity of the decorative motifs of the rug and the radiating configuration of the figure itself.

"Flowers in Glass Vase" (Plate 24), painted a year later than "Red Rug," fully embodies the general characteristics of Matisse's painting during the Nice period—a pervasive, gentle delicacy, a pearly tonality, a watercolor brightness, lightness and transparency, a subtly blurred, airy, atmospheric ambiance. In this still life, Matisse gives us again the familiar dramatic opposition of two themes of color—here, the vivid, saturated, bright reds, greens, etc., of the flowers, crisp in shape and set in clear space, and the mottled, pearly, diffuse, fluid grayish lavender of the nebulous, ill-defined space-setting in which the vase and flowers appear to be suspended.

Whatever in the original actual situation the setting may have been—window, windowsill or tabletop, and wall, perhaps—it has been given a new identity, that of a "sheet"

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*Mistaken for and erroneously described as "bed with cover" in *The Art of Henri-Matisse,* by Albert C. Barnes and Violette de Mazia, The Barnes Foundation Press, Merion, Pa., 1933, p. 411.

of space which, in this variation of Matisse's usually two-dimensional plane-setting, floats around the vase of flowers it contains and buoys up. The vase itself, its stem and base, by their gently and smoothly defined drawing and patterns that repeat those of the flowers, act as, figuratively speaking, a hyphen, an intermediary agent, between the bright, vivid and crisply drawn flowers and the subdued tonal ambiance around them. The luminosity that pervades the entire canvas is a further organic link that unifies the two color themes, with no harm done to the picturesque drama of their contrast.

From the standpoint of features transferred from or bearing an affinity to previous occurrences in the traditions, we may cite Manet (*e.g.,* Plate 18), readily seen in the use of the sheet-like setting and in the simplifications and the spontaneity of the brush work in the flowers and vase; Redon (*e.g.,* Plate 53), in the levitating of the vase; Japanese woodcut prints of the type shown on Plate 14, in the exotic, vivid colors and exotic juxtaposition of them, as, here, in the flowers; and the type of Japanese prints represented on Plate 41, in the generally pale, pearly delicacy, the "watery" character of the color scheme, relieved by a concentrated grouping of positive color notes. And the gentle contrast of crisp and diffuse units is reminiscent of corresponding effects seen in some early Chinese work (*e.g.,* Plate 86). Moreover, the pale lavender tonality that frequently colors the delicate grays in Matisse's paintings of the Nice years, as it does in "Flowers in Glass Vase," recalls Hindu-Persian miniatures of the seventeenth century (*e.g.,* Plate 15), in which, as in Matisse, that lavender tempers the vividness of other colors and gives to the entire organization a particular gentleness, delicacy and lightness. Nor is it forced or farfetched to list also as another transferred quality or affinity the atmospheric ambiance of Rembrandt (*e.g.,* Plate 29). All of these features modify what the painting holds of the Impressionists' high-key color and luminous atmosphere and of the atmosphere of the Mediterranean seashore, and all merge into the distinctive identity of Matisse's "Flowers in Glass Vase," in and of itself a creative adaptation of some

of his own previous but differently carried out picture ideas.

Matisse's "Nude near Window" (Plate 22), painted in 1920, is obviously not a still life, but the treatment and organization of the objects of still life in it, the inanimate things—dressing table, flower piece, floor, window—have a strong bearing on the character of the entire compositional presentation. An affinity to, rather than a direct borrowing of, characteristics associated with Renoir's painting is readily perceptible,* even though none of the elements that make up the picture has anything in itself that is *like* Renoir's, nor can one claim that the picture as a whole is *like* anything we would see in Renoir. Matisse absorbed, we might say, the essence of Renoir's delicacy and made it his—as had happened earlier with respect to characteristics of Cézanne, Manet, Gauguin, the Japanese and other artists upon whose work he drew. Delicacy, fluidity, voluptuous sensuousness, together with the lightness of touch, are, in Matisse, in comparison with Renoir, of the colors themselves and of their relationships, rather than of what as volumes or textures they bring about. The texture of the paint, seemingly immaterial, more as if it were watercolor than oil, adds to the delicacy of the color. An interplay of "plain and print" areas, *à la* Japanese printmakers, and an interlocking interplay of grays and pale pink, with colorful punctuations—of green (among the flowers), of orange-red (of the floor) and of blue (of the sky)—make for a relatively intricate decorative design, while retaining the uncomplicated simplicity of statement that the picture as a whole first conveys. For their placement in reference to each other and to the other areas of the canvas, the three color accents (green, orange-red and

*When living in Nice, Matisse entertained a friendly relationship with Renoir, a neighbor of his on the Mediterranean coast, until Renoir's death in 1919. It may be of interest to note that Renoir, on his side, had in his "Standing Odalisque" (Plate 23), of *c.* 1918, tried to bring into his picture conception something of the decorativeness of Matisse's. Unfortunately, Renoir's stress on the color as color and on its luminosity led to a sacrifice, a compromise, of his own color solidity and structural depth, its weight, its inner glow: the volumes are flabby, and the glow tends to be a superficial glint.

blue) anchor and help to contain the entire color organization, which, otherwise, would appear colorless, monotonous and compositionally open-ended.

In spite of the presence of two figures in the makeup of Matisse's "Chinese Casket" (Plate 89), the picture shows primarily an arrangement of inanimate things: *i.e.,* it is a still life. It was painted in 1922 and, in the delicacy and lightness of its color scheme and its pastel tones, is typical of the work done during the nineteen twenties. Highly decorative by its display of patterning motifs, of contrasts of "plain and print" areas and of light and delicate, though positive, colors, the composition is basically one of parallel vertical planes succeeding each other compactly as they recede, one behind the other, within a shallow depth of space. A "sheet" distortion of perspective is made to serve this interest by the fact that table front and tabletop link together into a single, upright plane* that looms up into the picture from the lower front and the right corner. Beyond it, parallel and close to it, the plane occupied by the figure in white at the left slides in laterally partly behind the foreground "sheet." Farther back, at right of center and at the right, two more planes—figure and vertical band of wall—enter the receding sequence of planes. Finally, the large expanse of wall closes up the recession and acts as still another plane, which, this time, slides into the picture from the left side and upper edge of the picture.† By its location and action, this plane counterbalances, at the upper left of the background, the large

*Occurring also, as we noted earlier, in Matisse's "Dinner Table—Harmony in Red," of *c.* 1909, and in "Goldfish and Sculpture," of 1911. But each time the nature of the planes themselves and of their context and their interrelationships are what they are in order to be a means to achieving Matisse's distinctive design in each picture.

† A similar compositional concept is to be noted in the Korean painting of the sixteenth century shown on Plate 34, in which figure, parts of animal, etc., likewise slide in, in turn, in back of each other. The nature of the units, however, in the Matisse picture bears no resemblance whatever to that of those—dark, illustrative and three-dimensional—in the Korean canvas.

In like manner, in Gritchenko's "Greek Landscape" (Plate 62), the relationships among the main units—the planes that make up the mountains—are such that each area slips laterally into the painting behind the others.

area of tablecloth in the foreground and, with it, holds in compactly the other planes. Background wall and foreground plane, moreover, carry our eye across from lower right to upper left and thus counterbalance the slant in the opposite direction created by the figures and the flowers. The vertically-set compote and basket parallel the upright direction of the figures and of the division of wall at the upper right and stabilize the diagonals noted above. All of these planes play over and across and partly overlap each other, providing a locking effect one can easily transfer from that of the blades that make up the shutter of a camera.

From the standpoint of transferred qualities, one detects in "Chinese Casket" Manet's flattening of volumes, the simplification of his drawing and the expressiveness of his brush stroke (*e.g.,* Plate 18); the Japanese surface decorativeness and the gentle drama of the "plain and print" contrasts seen in their woodcuts (*e.g.,* Plate 14); the pastel scheme and daintiness of the eighteenth-century French portraitists (*e.g.,* Plate 88); the early French tapestries' "*mille fleurs*" patterning (*e.g.,* Plate 92); and such other fabrics as small-patterned chintz (*e.g.,* Plate 90). All of this has, of course, been re-shaped, pruned and added to for the fulfillment of *this* picture intent.

The decorative motifs in the Matisse are less regular than in any of the fabrics or tapestries referred to, yet transferred from one motif to the other is the character of the brush stroke itself. Its diversity in size, color and relationships spreads a varied pattern in each of the main color areas, including those of the roses, the stems of the pears and the figures' facial features. The keynote to this decorative use of the individual brush stroke is in the dark strand of hair dramatically silhouetted against the light color of the woman's forehead at the upper center.

Another compositional transferred value within the picture is to be found in the slow golden curve of the base of the compote as it is repeated in its golden rim and as the curving golden character of these units is carried over to the golden necklace of the woman in white, with her

neckline, in its open curving, rhythmically connecting with the curve of her forehead and eyebrows, the shoulder and outline of the arm of the other figure, the edge of the table, the base of the basket and the curves of the compote. The original, the actual, still life, needless to say, was never like this, could never have possibly been what Matisse's conception of it, as embodied in the picture, made it be.

Notwithstanding the fact that, until the end of his life, Matisse continued to live and to paint, for the greater part of each year, in the Nice area—in Nice or in Cimiez or in Vence—the paintings of his that are usually classified as of the Nice period were done between 1917 and about the mid-'twenties or one or two years beyond. They are distinguished as a group from both the preceding work and that which followed them. No longer, in the Nice period, is there the fiery color of the Fauve years, the flamboyant yellows, the reds and the deep, saturated blues and greens; nor is there the extreme daring of their juxtapositions; nor are there the grays and tans, relatively opaque, that appear in the paintings showing the influence of Cubism. Instead, a calm, gentle, delicate, airy and subtle color harmony, not lacking, for all its lightness and subdued pearly quality, an internal gleaming luminosity that enlivens, as it reinforces, the appeal of the intrinsic sensuousness of the color tonality.

This is not, by any means, to say that the work belonging to these Nice years is "better" or richer or more deftly executed than that preceding it: nothing of the sort fits the case. But what is a fact is that, in the paintings of the Nice period, a new interest is revealed and, correspondingly, new adaptations are revealed also in the selection and use of color, light, line and space to fulfill the new requirements. Expressive decorativeness remains primary, but its previous boldness of statement is now tempered, as we have noted, with such qualities as delicacy and gentleness and lightness. And the features that set the paintings of the Nice period apart persist, in some fashion, in the work that follows; they qualify and, in turn, are qualified by the new decorative ideas Matisse carries out in his use of color

and of pattern, as he continues to transform still life or landscape or figure or what not into novel, expressively decorative entities.

Indeed, if we were to pursue our study of Matisse's still lifes through the subsequent years of his career, we would continue to find that he was constantly able to subject objects of still life to the effects of constantly new picture purposes, each one so much Matisse, yet each one so different from the others.

Without detailing specific changes but indicating only some of the salient novel characteristics of Matisse's post-Nice paintings, we can point out, as general features, a firmer density and a more emphatic positiveness of color, together with a greater sense of directness in the contrasts than in his Nice period. The freshness and vivacity distinctive of the Nice color, as well as the patterning, are, on the whole, retained, even when dark tones, including black, are included in the color scheme. The overall pearly hues have all but been relinquished or else have been made to take a secondary position in the totality of the color design, as, for example, in the two still lifes "Lemons against a Fleur-de-lis Background" (Plate 30), dated 1943, and "Pineapple" (Plate 33), of 1948, wherein, in both, an interplay again occurs between two color themes, one of which—the area of the fruit and supporting base in "Lemons against a Fleur-de-lis Background" and the "flaps" of what could have been the folds of a napkin in "Pineapple"—harks back to the pearly, delicate hues typical of the Nice period.

Such an organization of two color themes—the dramatic confrontation set up between them—has been, as we have seen, used by Matisse on a number of earlier occasions (*e.g.,* Plates 21, 22, 36 and 73), but as we have also seen, the basic compositional concept each time takes on its own new identity as it is carried out in terms of different color components and different relationships among them. The two still lifes mentioned above are illustrations of Matisse's ingenuity in this respect. In "Pineapple," the units of pale colors to the left of and immediately above the pineapple are brought out with emphasis by a black line defining their shapes and by their context of large areas of red,

green and orange, which areas, were it not for their own black outline, could have been taken direct from Matisse's Fauve paintings (*e.g.,* Plate 65).

Another compositional setup familiar in Matisse is given new expressive and decorative significance in "Lemons against a Fleur-de-lis Background." Here, the area of pearly, delicately colored fruit and supporting base is inserted, as it enters the picture from the right-hand side, into the rose area, which depicts both the entire background and the immediate foreground below the fruit. Despite the fact that this rose-colored area is patterned with a different linear motif on its upper and lower sections and that the lower section, including the fruit, is projected slightly forward from the background by the faint sense of perspective established there, the rose area enframes the pearly-toned area on three of its sides and sets it off as a dramatic counter theme—an end result radically different from that of Matisse's earlier uses of the enframing idea (*cf., e.g.,* Plate 73) and another mark of his imaginative versatility within a relatively narrow field of basic, simple organizational concepts.

In "Large Red Interior" (Plate 27), of 1948, Matisse's own picture "Pineapple" (Plate 33, discussed above) figures as one of the main objects of still life, and its exotic Fauve colors strike a bizarre note of contrast with the rest of the canvas, which is predominantly red, although echoes of the yellows, blues and greens of "Pineapple" occur in the flowers, the vases and the fruit and also in the very foreground of the floor. "Pineapple" in "Large Red Interior" is paired off on the background wall with another of Matisse's pictures, "The Black Ferns," one of a series he did, about a year earlier, either mostly or entirely in black India ink, an example of which is reproduced in "color" on Plate 44.

"Large Red Interior" is richly and colorfully varied, but it is the red of the "sheet" setting that gives it its dominant note, partly because of the large area this red encompasses and partly because its color, tone and texture are not in the least interrupted as it—that very same red—makes up whatever amount of substance the two tables and the chair

seat have. In fact, without the black outline that defines these objects, the tables and chair seat would have no existence as such in the picture, for it is only to the perspective of these black contour-lines that we owe the impression of depth. On the other hand, in Matisse's "Interior with Egyptian Curtain" (Plate 32), also of 1948, the black serves as a color to set off the contrasting bright hues.

Black had been used by Matisse before this period, but, until the early 1930s, it served mainly as an adjunct to color and color drama, occurring either as an outline that emphasized the contrasts between color areas (*e.g.,* Plate 36) or as an illustratively descriptive element, a black of a represented unit—as, for example, a black blouse (*e.g.,* Plate 85), a black dress (*e.g.,* Plate 93), black hair (*e.g.,* Plate 77), and so on. It was not until 1931, while working on "The Dance" (Plate 70), finished in 1933, that, as Matisse mentioned on the occasion of his visit to The Barnes Foundation for the installation of the mural (see page 55 and Plate 70), he became acutely aware of the inherent "colorfulness" of black.

In doing "The Dance," Matisse also began to use colored paper, specifically, at that time, as a means of planning the composition of the mural. He would affix to the canvas large pieces of gouached paper cut in shapes he was experimenting with, take them down to modify their contours or to try other shapes or differently colored pieces in their stead, altering and replacing as often as necessary until the arrangement at last satisfied him. Then, removing one paper at a time, he would apply on the portion of the canvas thus uncovered whatever pigment he had used on the paper for the area. In the late '40s and in the '50s, he went back to the use of cut-out paper, but now as a medium of expression in the sense that the finished picture was itself made up of the gouached paper cut-outs instead of paint on canvas.

"Acanthi" (Plate 94), of 1952, which depicts the foliage of the acanthus plant, is an example of a still life done in this medium. The initial effect is of a two-dimensional pattern silhouetted against the blank background. A closer study, however, reveals an illusory play back and forth in shallow depth among the patterning units that gives the

whole a sense of animation. Although unlike, as a total entity, any of the other still lifes we have examined, this work equally has the Matisse "touch," notably, in the character of the decorative rhythm, the "*allure*" (in the French meaning of the word, *i.e.*, "pace," "gait," "movement," "bearing"), of the curves of the individual branches and individual leaves and of the relationships among these elements and between the fanning configuration they create and the remaining blank area of the picture.*

With what we have established by way of our discussion of Matisse's use of objects of still life in the painting of his pictures, we are ready more or less to pinpoint the nature of subject and of subject matter and of the relationship among these, the picture, the artist and the viewer. To do so, we should clear up one more prevalent misconception, summarized by the following paragraph quoted in a local newspaper from text issued by the Better Vision Institute:

> There are, from the optical standpoint, two schools of painting. The first school have eyes that are properly coordinated so as to obtain good depth perception. They see three-dimensionally. But the so-called ultramodern painters who paint flat, two-dimensional paintings have eyes that see, in a general manner, what they paint. Such eyes have poor depth perception. The figures, trees and other objects perceived by such eyes lack solidarity. For that reason the art produced by such eyes is of a primitive sort, best appreciated by persons who see and think in a two-dimensional world.

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* We are fully aware of the fact that the major points we undertook to make to lay the groundwork for discovering the nature and function of subject and subject matter and their respective rôles in the creative process might have been demonstrated with any one painting by Matisse or by any other artist. We were, however, motivated to do otherwise, *i.e.*, to consider a variety of Matisse's works with a view to spanning the whole of his career, and to do so in a chronological fashion, so that we might also bring out something of the character of Matisse's development as an artist—definitely not a development of progress in technical prowess or in depth of insight or in richness of expression or its refinement, but, as evidenced by our study, a development in which there is a widening of the range of the multifarious effects created, a continuous, never-failing refreshing, a renewing, as well as a reaffirming, of a highly distinctive personal response to the world around him conveyed in terms of expressively decorative color, light, line and space as he "rebuilt" the still life "to bring it closer to the heart's desire" and embodied it in the every-time-new picture statement. "Variations on a theme" is perhaps the appropriate way to describe and sum up the individuality of Matisse's "progress."

Egregiously faulty as this statement is—first and foremost, in taking for granted that the artist's interest and job are to re-produce what his eye records as it records it—its suppositions are nonetheless resoundingly echoed in much of what goes under the name of, and is widely accepted as, significant art criticism. About Renoir, for instance, it has been seriously contended that, as he grew older, his vision changed until he saw everything in tones of red, and that this is the reason his prevailing color scheme shifted, with the passing years, from blue and green to red. Yet, even were we simply to pretend that, say, his "Antibes" (Plate 58), which happens to be both late and "blue," did not exist, we would still, to maintain such a claim, have to answer this: suppose Renoir, in his late years, undertook to paint a portrait of a sitter in a bright green dress. In order to carry out his presumed intent to duplicate on his canvas the green of the dress—which color he, by virtue of his "defect," sees as a certain tone of red—what colors would he take from his tubes of pigment, and what palette mixture would he devise? He would, of course, select and prepare what to other people looks green, it being to him that particular shade of red the dress seems to have. That is to say, for the spectator the color will still appear green, not red—and the theory does not hold.

Correspondingly, of Cézanne it has been said that, because of uncorrected bifocal vision, he saw a single straight line as dismembered portions of it at different levels from each other—hence his distortions of perspective, as in the far edge of the table in his "Fruit and Tapestry" (Plate 72), where the left-hand portion of that edge fails to level off with the right-hand portion. But, let us now consider Cézanne and his wish to draw the far edge of a table in three-dimensional space. His visual "defect," it is said, leads him to see a straight line as a series of lines at different levels in their direction. In order, then, to satisfy his supposed intent, *i.e.*, to show the far edge of the table as it appears to his eyes, he, of course, draws a straight, not a broken, or vari-leveled, line. Again, down the drain goes the theory.

Nullified, too, on this basis, is the assertion recently made by medical professionals in regard to Van Gogh's prolific use of yellow in the paintings done in his late years—*viz.,* that it is due to the (probable) fact that Van Gogh was taking digitalis medication. Furthermore, that Dr. Gachet is shown in the portrait of him painted by Van Gogh (Plate 28) holding a branch of foxglove (from which digitalis is extracted) is given as evidence that the artist was familiar with the plant. But, after all, it is true that the yellow house Van Gogh used as part of landscapes in some of his late works was in actuality a yellow-painted house in the Midi, and it is true, too, that fields of ripe wheat saturated with Mediterranean sunlight do look, as they indeed are, yellow.

Obviously, in the cases of Renoir, of Cézanne and of Van Gogh, there is, as we noted, a wrong premise in the argument—namely, the assumption that the artist wants to re-produce on the canvas what his eye registers. Inconsistently enough, we might point out, no defect of vision is attributed to the writer who describes ships as "plowing" the sea, nor is he accused of an aberration of sight when he likens roiling waters to "a cauldron of boiling milk." And, indeed, does, for instance, Picasso's reputed remark that he paints what he finds or sees, even in the context of his most grotesque distortions, require of us allowances that we do not make, unasked and unhesitatingly, in the case of a writer with regard to his distortions of factual reality?

What, in truth, does an artist mean when he says that what he shows on his canvas is what he saw? Such seeing is, needless to say, not passive registration, but imaginative perception: it involves a doing as the artist looks and registers. The doing may be physical: because of what he sees that interests him then, the artist may remove, add or turn some of the objects he looks at, change their relationship to the light, move his easel, and so on. And, as important, if not more so, there is a doing that occurs even before or as the artist picks up his brush—an immediate action of his interest that selects to see or to ignore, so that the red or the blue or whatever assumes a more emphatic rôle in the setup than ever his eye reported, and things

take on an order that factually is not there. Simultaneously, there is an excitement, an emotion, that acts, too: Matisse is excited about the dramatic colorfulness of objects (*e.g.,* Plate 75); Cézanne, about their solidity, stability and weightiness (*e.g.,* Plate 72). Or, of outdoor scenes by various artists: Pascin sees, feeds on the animated and picturesque (*e.g.,* Plate 99); De Chirico feels deeply about the weirdness of empty space and infinity (*e.g.,* Plate 96); Utrillo is excited about intrinsic warmth and hominess (*e.g.,* Plate 97); Jean Hugo, too, responds to hominess, but in his case with the calm, cool, lyric effect of clean-cut delicacy (*e.g.,* Plate 101)—both Utrillo and Hugo having transferred qualities from Corot (*e.g.,* Plate 100) and the Dutch tradition (*e.g.,* Plate 52), Utrillo drawing more from the Dutch, their feeling of texture, their geometric pattern, and Hugo from the lyricism of Corot.

To put it succinctly, art can give, as Joyce Carey said, "both the facts and the feelings," according to the artist's personality, sensitivity, interest, etc. Indeed, interest and feeling are at the root of perception, and an artist in any field has his interest and feelings intensified by the urge to embody in some material the situation he feels he discovered that even he never saw before; hence, the excitement.

What happens for the artist is akin, in essence, to what, artist or not, we often experience. Every day we hear, we see things, the same things, again and again, and . . . they leave us cold. Then, one day, all of a sudden, we wake up to what is there or to what has been said that our eye, our ear had reported. Now it "clicks" for us, and we "click" with it. It appears to us like a revelation. Its meaning now shouts at us. We see, in a burst, the point of what is there, of what is said, the point of what had no interest or significance before. Something is touched off in us, and we are interested and excited, as if we were seeing, hearing it for the first time. And we really are, for, until then, our senses reported it to us, but *we* did not take it in. Moreover, now that we have discovered it and are excited, we want to express the meaning of our discovery, to tell the world about it and, at the same time, to make it clearer to

ourselves. And, if we do, our communication will not be of the cold facts or of all of the facts, but only of those aspects, characteristics, relationships now perceived, now discovered, that provide a sense of adjustment. We see so much more because we are really seeing.

The discoveries we thus make are not revealed through the agency of any miracle, although they often appear to be. Even a sudden religious conversion is made ready for by all kinds of previous impacts on our senses, stored by an unconscious that sorts, classifies, makes associations among, keeps on ice the sense reports, until the moment that as William James said, "it saunters back into our consciousness." Or, again citing William James to sum up this process of discovery, "it is the sixth newspaper boy who sells us the newspaper." We hear our teacher talking in class, we understand the words, but the points somehow fail to "click," until . . . what it means dawns on us, and then we hear it as we have never heard it before, because now we grasp its significance. The set-up still life in art class leaves us cold, until one day, often, unfortunately, on the last day for work on the project, we discover what is there and what we could do with it now. Or a friend's face or the tree outside the window or a picture by Matisse, suddenly it "clicks," and, as it does so, we begin to subject it to the effect of our interest and excitement.

The reason for our having discussed the Matisse still lifes from the point of view of each of their unique identities was precisely to illustrate the fact that each was the result of such an experience on the part of Matisse—a discovery, "an adventure in perception." He looked many times at the things, and they left him cold, until one day they "clicked," and he became excited; his imagination foresaw possibilities and began to direct his eye and his interest to certain, rather than to other, features there in front of him or that he recalled from some other time or times. And something then is being born—a theme, a plot, a picture design. What he takes in touches off, connects with something else, and he looks now *for* that and *with* that. He sees more accurately and, also, more imaginatively. He knows more and more what it is that he is

after. He knows, therefore, better what to select, what to slur over, what to do to and with what the eye reports of still life: he rebuilds it according to the picture theme that develops as he proceeds to "realize"—to make real or to transfer into the characteristics of his means—the characteristics of his experience.

The final product of all that occurred to Matisse, as we get it when we look at it, is far removed from what was there at some time or times. What was there is no longer the same, nor was Matisse the same any longer after the experience. He was *subjected* from the start to the effect on him of a particular situation, which, in turn, from beginning to end, he *subjected* to the positive effect of his interest, feelings, imagination, his entire personality.

We may now put our point in more general terms: the outside entity which, consciously or not, crystallized and served as the original objective stimulus, subjecting the artist to its effect and, in turn, subjected by him to his, is the subject about which his mind, feelings, etc., were exercised. Correctly stated, it *was* the subject of his creative experience, which results in what the picture *is*. Now we know!

How well did we follow? In Renoir's "The Spring" (Plate 11), what was the subject? It was the girl in the diaphanous garment, the grove in which she stood, and so on. In Ingres' "The Spring" (Plate 10)? There was hardly a subject, but, rather, a posing figure, of which the picture is more or less a copy. The same is true of the work of a student who looks at the model and, to the best of his technical ability, puts down what his eye has reported: he has a model, not a subject, and he produces a more or less technically successful copy of it.

By the same token, a still life arrangement, a landscape, a figure and such can be a potential subject, but by and of itself never is. The outside situation, no matter what it be, becomes, functions as, a subject only as it is being perceived, experienced, from the standpoint of a specific, personal interest—*i.e.,* only as it is subjected to the effect

of the artist's personality and according to an individual creative purpose or design.

Correspondingly, from the standpoint of the spectator, what is the subject of a picture? It is what he recognizes in the work that tells of what was, apart from what it became and is now—not, for instance, in Matisse's "Blue Still Life" (Plate 75), soaring eagle, semi-precious jewels, wet marble, marionettes, but a kind of tablecloth, vase, screen, urn, etc.

As for subject matter, it, on the other hand, comprises not what was, the outside stimulus, but what is revealed of the artist's conception of what was—the shapes, colors, textures the subject is *now* made of, its "substance," as John Dewey calls it, *i.e.,* the matter the subject acquired throughout the artist's experience. Subject matter, then, obviously is near to what the picture is. And the subject which had just been born is literally still-born, since it starts on the way to becoming subject matter as it starts to acquire new characteristics at the artist's first *interested* look. That is to say, simultaneously with the first interested look come selections, omissions, additions, emphases, alterations of existing relationships—and subject, having acquired new matter, new attributes, takes on at once the status of subject matter: perception of a situation as the subject of an experience flows into the birth and development of subject matter.

Consequently, subject, in a creative piece of work, is always a thing of the past, and there is no way to ascertain, by what the picture shows, exactly what it was. Logically, it should be referred to in the past tense—table, cloth, vases, for example, *made* up the subject of the picture—whereas the subject matter pertains to the here and now, to what is on the canvas as we look at it; it can legitimately be referred to in the present tense—the blue tablecloth, the vividly green vase *make* up part of the picture's subject matter.

To round out our discussion, we need to make mention of one more element that, with subject and subject matter, identifies a painting. As vital to the comprehension of the creative process as is the need to distinguish subject and subject matter from each other, no less vital is the need to perceive the relationships among, the relative placement of, the components of subject and subject matter, for it is

all three—subject, subject matter and relationships—that bring about the total entity that is the picture and that, therefore, give rise to picture meanings.

Briefly, picture meanings are the meanings that subject matter acquires as a result of the artist's giving it existence *and* specific organization. To objectify this, let us again borrow from our study of Matisse's "Blue Still Life" (Plate 75): fruit on table, etc., constituted its subject; the deep, saturated, glowing blues and reds, the lustrous darks, including their varied transferred qualities, etc., make up its subject matter; and the vivid, dramatic contrasts of the direct, sharp juxtaposition of these color units, the compactness of their grouping, their relationships to each other on the canvas—the step formation, the contrasting diagonal sequences, etc.—are what complete the picture facts, hence, also, the picture significance. Obviously, it is the involvement, the meshing together, of all these aspects that establishes the identity of the picture, which is not just a still life of fruit on a table, not just a canvas of glowing, lustrous colors, not just a series of dramatic contrasts and compositional patterns, but, rather, a particular organization of dramatic color contrasts (relationships) among glowing color units (subject matter) that also say fruit on table (subject).

What, we should still ask, is the importance of subject for the artist? It is indispensable: no one, not even, as we shall show in a later essay, the so-called non-objective painters, can express meanings and feelings discovered and felt about nothing in the world, whether the subject be there as he paints or it be experienced piecemeal and at a number of times in the past. What is the importance of subject for the spectator? The answer is that, if we get a clue to what the subject was, then the meanings expressed become more specific: instead of color shapes that are dramatic, we have color shapes that say still life that are dramatic.

From what we have seen, it should be clear that subject refers to the illustrative aspect of a painting, and subject matter to the artist's conception of the illustrative aspect. For example, the events of the life of Joan of Arc are facts of history. Of such works about Joan as those by George

Bernard Shaw, Anouilh, Lillian Hellman, Maxwell Anderson and the movie on her made by Anderson and Solt, whatever be their respective titles, do they all have the same subject? Yes, insofar as a subject can be the same for a variety of people. Do they have the same subject matter? No. For, in every case, the aggregate of facts that served as the stimulus was subjected to the effect of a different individual's feelings, mind, imagination, past experiences, and so on, and it inevitably acquired different substance—acquired, that is, different subject matter.

And, now, what of subject and of subject matter in reference to transferred values? At the end of our discussion of transferred values in the previous issue of VISTAS,* we intimated that a study of subject and subject matter would be a natural follow-up to that of transferred values. Indeed, subject and subject matter and transferred values are aspects of the entity which, in their interrelationships, they create. Subject matter, by virtue of its relationship to, its action upon, subject, *transfers* into subject qualities that originally did not belong to it, but that belong to the nature of what is thus transferred. Every time, therefore, that our text points out or implies that new matter has been imparted to the subject, it could have as appropriately said that new matter has been *transferred* into the subject. Indeed, subject matter and transferred values are but two sides of the same coin. Subject matter refers to the matter itself—the glowing red, the vivid light, the vigorous line, etc.—and transferred values are the qualities of that matter—the glow of the red, the vividness of the light, the vigor of the line, etc. And our present essay, then, with, perhaps, the adjustment of a verb here and there, could reasonably have been entitled "Subject and Transferred Values" and have lost little for that.

Having established the distinction between subject and subject matter and clarified their respective function in reference to a work of art and their significance in refer-

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**Loc. cit.*, p. 49.

ence to the artist and to the viewer, it behooves us now, in fairness to ourselves and to the reader, to re-examine at least two or three of the paintings and the questions raised about them mentioned in the introductory remarks of this article. The paintings we shall first use are "Liberty" (Plate 55), by Delacroix, and "The Marseillaise" (Plate 6), by Arthur Carles. Neither the subject of these two paintings nor their subject matter is alike. Rather, what they have in common is only what we might call an "intellectual concept"—namely, "France must fight on, come what may!" or "The Spirit of France cannot be allowed to die!" or "France must survive!" And, of Picasso's "Guernica" (Plate 76), what can now be correctly stated is that its subject involved, among other things, a proud, contemptuous bull, a dying horse, an electric light bulb, a small bouquet of flowers, two women in despair—whether these, the subject facts, ever existed together at any one time or were imaginatively perceived as a group by the artist—and its subject matter is what makes up those things as they appear on the canvas—specifically, all the particular, dominantly angular, large, black, gray and white shapes. And the picture facts, qualities, meanings, are made specific and complete by the relationships established among the components of the subject matter—here, for instance, the shallow space and stark drama brought about by the juxtaposition of the black and white shapes set at an angle to each other. The phrases usually employed by art critics to account for the meaning of the work—"the horrors of war," "the inhumanity of man to man," etc.—as well as the title itself, belong in the category of "intellectual concept" mentioned above and, although they could well have been the artist's intellectual and/or emotional impetus for the selection of the subject and the re-creating of that subject in terms of subject matter and picture facts, are not *of* the painting, *i.e.*, not objectified by the makeup of the picture, but only by the possible implications of the subject—which, as such, is no longer there.*

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*Some of the publicity attending the sending of "Guernica" from the Museum of Modern Art in New York—where it had been for a number of years on indefinite loan—to be permanently installed in the Picasso Museum in Spain disclosed a fact pertinent to our point: Picasso had completed the painting *prior*

We should observe that the total picture meaning involves all of it —that is, not just the relationships among the components of the subject matter, not just the subject matter, but both of these and also the subject: the stark drama that qualifies "Guernica," for example, is *of* the black and white shapes that, after all, say horse, bull, etc., and each of these factors shares a part in the overall aesthetic identity of the work. Nor are these three things—subject, subject matter and relationships—in any outright sense, separable. They belong to each other; they partake of each other; and each of them owes its existence to the existence of the other two. Subject is not subject unless it yields its being to the birth of subject matter, and it, moreover, is responsible for the nature of at least some of the effects of the relationships; nor can subject matter have an existence except for subject having given it birth; and relationships are whatever they are by virtue of the artist's response to and experience of subject and his transformation of it into subject matter. In short, each one of the three aspects flows into, encroaches upon and is in part responsible for the identity of the other two.*

Of subject and subject matter, then, it is, indeed, by their deeds that we know them. But what are these deeds? What is it that subject and subject matter, respectively, precisely do? A question now easy to answer: the subject, as the outside stimulus it was, awakens the artist's interest, arouses his feelings, stirs up his background knowledge,

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to the destruction by Franco's planes of a small, defenseless town in the Pyrenees, and, *subsequent* to the occurrence and reporting of the tragic bombardment, the artist went back to his canvas, added a few units to it here and there (symbolic, perhaps?) and then gave it the title "Guernica"—the name of the town which had suffered the massacre. "As is well known, the images that are the basis of 'Guernica' occur in drawings that antedate by over a year the bombing of the Basque town," wrote Kenneth Clark in his *The Other Half—A Self-Portrait.*

*Our subject for this essay was the nature of and the part played by subject and subject matter in a work of art. Our subject matter consisted of the various points and examples offered. And the comparisons drawn and the conclusions reached established the essay's factual significance that corresponds to what of a painting we would describe as the activity of its relationships.

quickens his imagination, focusses his intelligence, stimulates his overall creativeness. The subject matter, arising from the artist's accepting and rejecting from what the subject provided, endows that subject with its new substance, new matter, and transforms the identity it had into the here-and-now present subject matter.* Or, as in Matisse's own words: *"L'objet est un acteur . . . il faut que l'objet agisse puissamment sur l'imagination. . . . Il faut que le sentiment de l'artiste s'exprimant par lui le rende digne d'intérêt, il ne dit que ce qu'on lui fait dire."*†

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For our article in the next issue of VISTAS, we plan to direct our attention to the concept of instrumentalism through a comparative analytical study of two paintings—each one by a different artist—from the standpoint of the artist's use of his means with regard to the relationship between subject and subject matter in reference to the picture significance.

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*See diagram, Plate 103.

†The object [subject] is an actor, . . . it must act powerfully on the imagination. . . . The artist's feelings, expressing themselves through it, must make it worthy of interest; it says only what one makes it say.

HENRI MATISSE
"The Dance"

1931
At Nice

1933
At Merion

April 1933
Un fait accompli

At Nice

Matisse and a study for *The Dance* (Plate 70)

At Merion

Installation of *The Dance* (Plate 70)

April 1933

Matisse and Albert Nulty, Curator
at The Barnes Foundation,
contemplating
un fait accompli

Pi-cas-so[1]
[1]Painter*

by Serena Rattazzi

BUFFALO—In the last few years, we have been witnessing a progressive takeover of museum walls by the written word—in the form of the omnipresent, all-explaining, ever-larger wall label.

Some museums do the wall-label bit more than others, some do it only with special exhibitions—I can think of one or two recent "blockbuster" shows that were mostly wall labels—and others, with the permanent collection as well.

It has become impossible to see an exhibition without having to run a gauntlet of chronologies, historical notes, reproductions of the very works of art shown in the flesh a few steps farther, quotations from the catalogue, maps, blown-up photographs, and, of course, acknowledgements of the corporate sponsor.

When one is finally allowed to look at the works—if one has any time left—all that information acts as a screen between one's eyes and mind and the art. It keeps interfering with the esthetic experience, like a background noise in what should be a silent environment or extraneous voices interrupting what should be a one-to-one dialogue.

All this is caused by the mistaken assumption that to know more facts about a work of art helps to understand and enjoy it. This is often called "museum education" or "enhancing the art experience." The public is not considered capable of arriving at any independent conclusions about a work of art without being told who made it, when and

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*Courtesy, The New York Times Company, New York, N.Y.

where it was made, what was used to make it, who influenced or was influenced by the artist, what the historical and art-historical situation was when the work was created, what battles were fought outside the artist's window, the vintage of the wine in his most recent still life.

A vicious circle has been created: The public expects the information and the museums provide it, and the more the museums provide it the more the public will expect it and feel at a loss without it. Thus, an already insecure public is made to feel unable to take even the simplest step toward esthetic judgment without the crutch provided by a label.

This bad habit has been justified as "making the art more accessible," but in fact it dangerously shifts the attention of the museum visitor away from the art work and on to the information *about* it.

In all my years of museum-going in Europe, I don't remember ever having been confronted by a written text, right there on the wall, explaining to me what I was seeing.

In the Vatican museums, there are no wall labels next to Raffaello's "Stanze," no wall labels in the Sistine Chapel. (A shiver runs down my spine. Could it be that things are different now and that there is, indeed, a wall label at the entrance to the Sistine Chapel, beginning, probably: "Michelangelo [Meek-ell-un'-jell-oh], who was one of the greatest artists of the Renaissance. . . .")

A museum without labels, then? What would happen if a visitor would come into a museum and find *only* works of art? Paintings and sculpture, photographs and prints, gloriously unidentified, defined not by a more-or-less-famous name, a recent or remote date, somebody else's opinion, but only by what they are, what they look like?

The visitors would not have to do what they all do now—look at the label first, at the art afterward. They would have only one thing to see, to appraise, to try to understand, to enjoy without background noises: the works of art.

Think of the challenge of installing a museum so that the visitor is "taken by the hand" by the works shown and unobtrusively guided through the history of art, to discover connections and contrasts, revolutions and counter-revolutions, masters and followers, simply by the flow of

one gallery into another, the juxtaposition of one work to another.

At the end of the visit, all the information traditionally destined for wall labels would be made available in other forms, so that artists, art historians, art educators (and the corporate sponsors) would get their due.

The visitor would thus acquire the information as the result of an act of active interest rather than passive reception, being the one to decide whether a map of the museum identifying the works in each gallery would provide all the answers, or whether he or she would need the more detailed knowledge provided by catalogues, critical writings, and the like.

In this way, museums would really educate, since a visit would result in a series of active intellectual processes—perception, examination, questioning, comparison, research—all more stimulating and ultimately more rewarding than the mere act of reading about something and then looking at it.

Serena Rattazzi is coordinator of public relations for the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, where wall labels tend to be small and brief.

Seven Sea Voyages

An Examination of the Role of the Sea in Anglo-Saxon Poetry

by Margaret Pyle Hassert*

The sea has always been important to England. One indication of this importance is its frequent appearance in English literature, beginning with the earliest extant manuscripts of the Anglo-Saxon period. Although only about 30,000 lines of poetry in the Old English language have survived, the number of references to the sea and the vocabulary alluding to it are amazingly large. An Anglo-Saxon poet obviously could and did call on many different words when he spoke of the sea.

Old English poetry was an oral, rather than a written, art. The Anglo-Saxon *scop,* or "shaper," recited his poems in a strict metrical pattern consisting of two half-lines,† each with two stressed syllables and a varying number of unstressed syllables. This pounding rhythm was reinforced by alliteration, usually in both stressed syllables of the a-line and in one from the b-line. Instead of memorizing a whole poem, as we might today, the *scop* learned tales and names, together with a store of formulaic phrases which fit into the metrical system. These often included kennings—compounds of two words in place of a single common one; thus, *sae*‡ ("sea") could be expressed as *swanrad* ("riding-place of the swan") or *hwaelweg* ("whale-path"). Frequently they were placed in apposition with

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*Alumna of the course in the philosophy and appreciation of art at The Barnes Foundation.

†The normal Old English line fell into two units, a-line and b-line, separated by a heavy caesura.

‡Throughout this essay, the Old English digraph *æ* has been reproduced as *ae*.

each other, producing a piling up of descriptive detail, while also accentuating the metrical beat. The *scop*'s skill in choosing and arranging appropriate formulas determined to large degree the artistic value of his song. When the poetry was finally written down, the scribes, doubtless aware of the formulas, made extensive use of them. An examination of Old English poetry clearly indicates this, but, at the same time, it shows that the employment of formulaic lines or kennings does not obviate artistry or connotative value. Indeed, the latter is often enhanced by the particular phrases chosen.*

The literary function of the sea in Old English poetry ranged from the purely realistic to the purely allegorical. Nowhere is this clearer than in six works from the literature which contain major descriptions of the sea-voyage: the heroic epic *Beowulf;* the lyrical elegies *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer;* and the religious narratives *Elene, Christ 2,* and *Andreas.*

The eighth-century epic *Beowulf* contains a large number of references to the sea. However, although, as Klaeber points out, "the large part which the sea played in the life of the Beowulfian peoples finds expression in an astonishing wealth of terms applied to it and in numerous allusions to its dominating geographical importance,"[1] the sea is spoken of in purely descriptive terms carrying little or no metaphoric value. In particular, the two voyages in the poem are simple descriptions of uneventful sea voyages. The voyage of the Geats to the land of Hrothgar and the Danes (lines 198–228) has seven specific mentions of the sea:[2]

200a—ofer swanrade—over the riding-place of the swan

210b—flota waes on ythum—the ship was on the waves

{ 212b—streamas wundon—the currents eddied
{ 213a—sund with sande—the water against the sand

*A parallel in Modern English is the formulaic phrase "once upon a time"; the use of this phrase immediately sets up in the audience an expectation of fantasy, of timelessness, and a willingness to suspend disbelief, together with a confidence that the story will end "happily ever after."

217a—gewat tha ofer waegholm—it went then over the billow-sea
223b—tha waes sund liden—then was the water traversed
228a—thaes the him ythlade—then because for them the wave-path

The homeward voyage of the Geats (lines 1888–1919) contains eight mentions:

1888a—cwom tha to flode—then came to the flood
1904a—drefan deop waeter—to stir up the deep water
1907b—wind ofer ythum—the wind over the waves
1909b—forth ofer ythe—forth over the waves
1910b—ofer brimstreamas—over the ocean-streams
1914a—hrathe waes aet holme—quickly was he at the sea
1916a—fus aet farothe—longing at the current
1918b—thy laes hym ytha thrym—lest from them the force of the waves

The ship flies "most like to a bird" "over the riding-place of the swan," "over the billow-sea," to the aid of Hrothgar and his Danes, without incident, although, as they land, the Geats thank God that their "way across the waves" has been so easy. The trip home is equally uneventful; only at journey's end is "the force of the waves" mentioned. The sea in these accounts is a highway, a way of getting from one place to another; that it could have been dangerous is acknowledged only at the end of each voyage. The words used to denote "sea" are, therefore, generally neutral, carrying simply the connotative value of the motion of the water and its deepness, thereby reinforcing the idea of the voyage across the waters, rather than serving to describe the waters themselves. The kennings *waegholm* ("the billow-sea"), *ythlade* ("the wave-path"), and *brimstreamas* ("the ocean-streams") specifically augment the sense of the speed and movement both of ship and of water. At the same time, *swanrad* ("the riding-place of the swan") emphasizes the calm quality of the voyage and suggests the gracefulness of the ship itself.

Two other eighth-century poems contain sea-

voyages—*The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer. The Wanderer* is an elegy in which the speaker laments his lordless lot as he sails alone, mourning the lost glories of his previous life and extending his plaint into an *ubi sunt* theme, yet finding consolation in faith at the end. There are six specific references to the sea:[3]

3a—geond lagulade—through the waterway
4b—hrimcealde sae—rime-cold sea
24b—ofer wathema gebind—over the expanse of the waters
46b—fealwe wegas—dark waves
57a—ofer wathema gebind—over the expanse of the waters
82a—ofer heanne holm—over the high seas

Since the references are all complete half-lines, it is probable that they are formulaic; indeed, the repetition of *ofer wathema gebind* in lines 57a and 24b strengthens this supposition. Nevertheless, this does not in any sense mean that the phrases have not been chosen with conscious thought for their total connotative value. The cumulative effect is one of vastness in which the Wanderer is all but lost in his puny humanness and of the cold and darkness of the sea, intensifying his feelings of loneliness and loss. The aimlessness of his voyage underlines the theme of a man cast adrift from his former life. Obviously, in this poem, unlike *Beowulf,* the sea assumes a metaphoric meaning beyond its purely realistic use as a setting. The Wanderer is cast out from the haunts of men into the cold, dark, lonely "expanse of the waters." The sea has become a sombre expression of his present life; the words chosen to describe it deepen the total effect.

Although less an organized whole than *The Wanderer, The Seafarer* displays much of the same attitude. It is a sailor's lamentation over the hardships of sea voyages, although he still finds them preferable to life on land—a preference variously interpreted by critics of the poem as expressing a Christian allegory of salvation through suffering, a pilgrimage theme, and a romantic love of the sea *per se* upon which a Christian moral has been grafted. The realistic descriptions of the sea disappear half-way through

the poem; and the speaker turns to a philosophic sermonizing on the transitory nature of life and the eternalness of heavenly joys—the theme of the poem. There are seventeen specific references to the sea:[4]

{ 5b—cearselda fela—many abodes of sorrow
{ 6a—atol ytha gewealc—the hateful rolling of the waves
12a—merewergas mod—the heart of one weary of the sea
14b—iscealdne sae—the ice-cold sea
{ 18b—butan hlimman sae—except the sea roaring
{ 19a—iscaldne waeg—the ice-cold wave
30a—in brimlade—in the ocean path
{ 34b—thaet ic hean streamas—that I the high seas
{ 35a—sealtytha gelac—the tumult of the salt-waves
42a—thaet he a his saefore—that he always his sea-voyage
46b—nefne ymb ytha gewealc—except the rolling of the waves
47b—se the on lagu fundath—he who sets out eagerly on the water
52a—on flodwegas—on the sea-ways
59b—mid mereflode—with the sea-tide
60a—ofer hwaeles ethel—over the haunt of the whale
63a—hweteth on hwaelweg—urges on the whale-path
64a—ofer holma gelagu—over the expanse of ocean

Here again, as in *The Wanderer,* the sea not only provides the physical setting but also echoes and strengthens the underlying theme. The prevailing mood is set by the first mention—"many abodes of sorrow" in apposition with "the hateful rolling of the waves"; both the ironic metaphor and the following explicit adjective reinforce the elegiac tone. The vastness of the sea, its coldness and hostility, are stressed by the kennings *hwaeles ethel* and *hwaelweg;* the largeness of the whale implies the equal largeness of the element in which it exists, together with the sense of a species distinct from mankind.

Peculiar to this poem is the use of the sea in a specifically

physical way. The sea is seen and heard; its saltiness and ice-coldness are recognized, with their implications of touch, taste, and smell. This physical sensing of the sea, however, carries over into a larger metaphoric meaning. As the speaker moves to a contemplation of Heaven, the sea, tied to man's physical nature, leaves the poem. In the same way, the physical nature of man is transitory, while his spiritual senses are eternal and of God; the earthly life is but a way to heavenly eternity. Thus, the sea assumes dimensions in this poem which are larger than either pure realism or pure metaphor; the blending of the two elements leads to a poetic expression in which the sea becomes an integral part of the theme, both in its reality and in its metaphoric value.

Three of the ninth-century religious narrative poems ascribed to Cynewulf and his school also contain accounts of sea voyages—*Elene, Christ 2,* and *Andreas*.

Elene, the story of St. Helena's discovery of the Cross, returns to much the same use of the sea as *Beowulf*. The voyage is simply descriptive, a way for Elene and her band of warriors to reach the land of the Greeks. There are twelve mentions of the sea in the voyage section (lines 225–255):[5]

227a—ymb geofenes staeth—stood by the ocean
228b—sunde getenge—near to the sea
231b—aet wendelsae—at the sea of the Vandals (*i.e.,* the Mediterranean)
237a—leton tha ofer fifelwaeg—then over the monster-waves they let
239a—ofer earhgeblond—over the stirred-up crests
239b—ytha swengas—the blows of the waves
240a—sae swinsade—the sea resounded
{ 241a—on egstreame—on the ocean-stream
{ 242a—on merestraete—on the sea-road
244a—brecan ofer baethweg—breaking over the bath-way
249a—ofer lagofaesten—over the water-fastness
253a—on brime bidan—waiting on the sea

As in *Beowulf,* there is a large number of words meaning "sea," but their total effect is neutral, without metaphoric

meaning. The sea is a realistic natural object which serves as a road, a way to reach another land which lies at a distance. The kennings are not descriptive of individualized attributes of the sea, but are, rather, generalized and universal. The ease of the journey is stressed by the kenning *baethweg* ("bath-way"), here implying only the sea's calmness for the journey.

In direct contrast, the section in Cynewulf's *Christ 2* from line 850 to line 866 is a purely allegorical sea-voyage, in which the voyage with its many hardships is man's life, coming to an end in the "harbor of salvation." There are eight specific mentions of the sea, beginning with a comparison to the life of man:[6]

850b—swa we on laguflode—as if we on the ocean
851a—ofer cald waeter—over the cold water
852a—geond sidne sae—upon the wide sea
853b—is thaet frecne stream—that is a perilous stream
854a—yth ofermaeta—limitless waves
855b—windge holmas—windy billows
856a—ofer deop gelad—over the deep road (i.e., sea)
858a—ofer hreone hrycg—over the tempestuous back of the ocean

As in *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer,* the coldness, danger, and vastness of the sea are stressed. These aspects are, of course, those which would be most meaningful as symbols for the life of man, particularly when used in comparison with the safety and peace offered by God.

Andreas contains the most sustained voyage description in Anglo-Saxon poetry. The passage goes from God's order to St. Andrew to travel across the sea to Mermedonia, beginning at line 174, to the final end of the voyage, line 827. It includes Andrew's reluctance to make the journey for fear of the sea and its unknown quality, God's rebuke, the embarkation on a ship manned by God and two of His angels, posing as ordinary seamen, a fearful storm at sea, a discussion of the storm between the Captain (God) and Andrew, a day-long praise of the Lord by Andrew directed toward the still-unknown God in His pose as a master-mariner, and, finally, the spiriting of the

sleeping band to their destination by the angels. There are more than one hundred terms explicitly designating the sea; however, of particular interest are the four passages in which the sea-storm is described. First, the narrator tells of the storm in lines 369–385:[7]

370a—onhrered hwaelmere—the whale-ocean was stirred up
371a—glad geond garsecg—moved upon the ocean
373b—waegas grundon—the waves dashed together
374a—streamas styredon—the currents were in an uproar
379b—on eagorstream—on the ocean-currents
382b—on holmwege—on the sea-way
383a—ofer argeblond—over the mingling of the waters

Andreas prays, describing the storm (lines 386–400):

390a—ofer firigendstream—over the stream that is a mountain (of immensity)
{ 392b—garsecg hlymmeth—the ocean roars
{ 393a—geofon geotende—the surging sea
{ 393b—grund is onhrered—the ocean-bed is aroused
{ 394a—deope gedrefed—stirred up from the depths

God, in his role as Captain, tells Andreas to comfort his frightened men; Andreas does so, describing other storms they have known (lines 438–460):

439a—ofer waruthgewinn—over the eddying surf
439b—waeda cunnedan—they ventured upon the waves
441a—egle ealada—the terrible ocean-path
441b—eagorstreamas—ocean-currents
442b—brun oft oncwaeth { another dark billow
443a—yth otherre { often replied
444a—of brimes bosme—from the bosom of the sea
451b—ythum stilde—He calmed the waves
452a—waeteres waelmum—the surges of the water
453a—sae sessade—the sea subsided
454a—merestreama gemeotu—the stretches of ocean-currents
456a—windas ond waegas—winds and waves
456b—ond waeter brogan—and terrible waters

The storm subsides; Andreas goes to praise the skill of the Captain, who then discusses the storm in metaphoric terms as a test of man's faith: (lines 511–536)

511b—thaet we on saelade—that we on the sea-road
513a—brecath ofer baethweg—plough the bath-way
514a—hwilum us on ythum—while to us on the waves
515a—gesaeleth on saewe—it happens on the sea
516b—flodwylm ne maeg—the surging sea may not
519a—se the brimu bindeth—he who restrains the sea
519b—brune ytha—the dark waves
529b—saeholm oncneow—the ocean answered
530a—garsecges begang—the expanse of the ocean
531b—haern eft onwand—the wave turned back
532a—arytha geblond—the tumult of the ocean waves
533a—widfaethme waeg—the deep and broad wave
533b—waedu swaethorodon—the flood subsided

These four descriptions of a storm at sea illustrate how the poet was able to choose among the many terms for "sea" to provide the precise sense he was seeking to portray. Both the similarities and the differences among the four passages are significant; the repetition of some terms from passage to passage (for example, *garsecg*) provides unity, while the various phrases emphasize the separate purpose of each description.

The narrative description begins with the mention of *hwaelmere* ("whale-ocean"), giving the idea of the ocean's immensity; the terms which follow, together with their verbs, stress the motion of the sea during the storm. The description becomes more threatening as Andreas tells of the storm in his prayer. The size of the ocean is now compared not to the whale but to a mountain; the fury of the storm reaches even to the depths of the sea. In addition, this section contains appositions, whose effect is to underline the emotional impact of the phrases. As Andreas tries to comfort his men, the terms become more general, without the specific terrors in his prayer, and the eventual end of the storm is foreshadowed by his recollec-

tions of other storms which have passed. The terms are still tied to actuality, yet they begin to assume a metaphorical meaning. The poet makes this clear by the many similarities between Andreas's words of comfort to his men and the Captain's discussion of the storm after it is over, in which He likens the storm to the hardships man can surmount if his faith is strong. In this final section, too, the threatening aspects present in the other three are lacking. The size of the ocean is even diminished; it is now a *baethweg* ("bath-way"), no longer a *hwaelmere* ("whale-ocean") or a *firigendstream* ("stream that is a mountain").

Thus, the storm is first presented by the narrator as an actual, physical phenomenon. In Andreas's description it becomes a specific threat to the lives of the men on the ship. As Andreas comforts his men, it assumes a generalized and semi-metaphoric quality; *the* storm has become Storm. After the real storm has passed, the Captain carries it, in the final passage, to a full metaphor for man's need for faith. This progression is aided by the poet's choice of sea-terms which, in their likenesses, tie the four passages together and, in their differences, stress the particular theme of each passage.

These seven voyages obviously serve different literary functions. The two journeys in *Beowulf* and the one in *Elene* are, as noted earlier, simply narrative; the protagonists are in one place, and the narrator must move them by sea to another. The sea is a real sea only, over which the ships move. At the other extreme is the passage from *Christ 2* in which the voyage is purely allegorical; it becomes a vehicle for the life of man, the journey he must make to reach Heaven. However, the use of the voyage in the remaining three poems is more complex, never totally divorced from actuality, yet still highly metaphoric. In *Andreas,* the four accounts of a storm during the voyage move from the realistic to the allegorical with the two center descriptions combining both in a varying degree. *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer,* much shorter poems, use the voyage as an integral part of the whole, instead of as an incident in a larger framework. In both, the sea voyage is

the setting; it is a real sea with real water and real danger that the speakers are traversing. At the same time, however, the sea lends itself to expressing man's lonely life on this earth, the path he must traverse before he gains salvation. The two functions are co-existent, incapable of division by specific lines. Since each poet had a large store of terms for the sea, he was able to use words which helped to distinguish the function of the passage in each case.

This great number of terms available to the poet clearly indicates the place of the sea in the Anglo-Saxon culture. One way of judging the importance of something in a particular society is to examine the number of ways its people have for expressing it. The importance of snow to Eskimos, for instance, can be seen in the wealth of terms in their language for snow in all its various forms. So, too, the speakers of Old English. As Caroline Brady points out in her exhaustive article on the subject,[8] the many words for "sea" in *Beowulf* are not, in most cases, synonyms, but rather precise designations for a particular characteristic of the sea—regions which are deep and far from land, those shallow and within sight of the shore, rough and stormy areas, and similar specific aspects. Consequently, the Anglo-Saxon poet could, by his choice of a term for "sea," strengthen and sharpen the meaning of his poetry.

NOTES

[1]"Introduction," *Beowulf* (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath & Co.),1950, lix—lx.

[2]Fr. Klaeber, ed., *Beowulf*. All *Beowulf* quotations are from this edition.

[3]Dorothy Whitelock, ed., *Sweet's Anglo-Saxon Reader* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1967, 160–64. All quotations from *The Wanderer* are from this edition.

[4]I.L. Gordon, ed., *The Seafarer* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts), 1966. All quotations from *The Seafarer* are from this edition.

[5]P.O.E. Gradon, ed., *Cynewulf's Elene* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd.), 1958. All *Elene* quotations are from this edition.

[6]Albert S. Cook, ed., *The Christ of Cynewulf* (Boston: Ginn & Co.), 1900. All quotations from *Christ 2* are from this edition.

[7]Kenneth R. Brooks, ed., *Andreas and The Fates of the Apostles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1961.

[8]Caroline Brady, "The Synonyms for 'Sea' in *Beowulf,*" *Studies in Honor of Albert Morey Sturtevant,* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press), 1952, 22–46.

Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*
An Analysis

by Frances Greenbaum*

As a student and teacher of literature, I have been exposed to the various theories which deal with the evaluation of literary endeavors. However, the question as to what criteria a novel, a poem, or a play should fulfill in order to qualify as "literature" has never been answered satisfactorily. Literary criticism has yet to come up with its own system of analysis to determine the aesthetic value of a piece of writing on a purely objective basis.

Five years ago, during my first year at The Barnes Foundation, while Miss Violette de Mazia was talking about illustrative, decorative, and expressive elements in visual works of art, about the integration of plastic form and subject matter, about variety within unity, about selection, and about transferred values, I did a little transferring of my own. In other words, I was struck by the applicability of the Barnes method to the analysis of "the art in writing."

The Barnes method points out that, while each art form has its own resources and must work within the framework of these resources, the means at its disposal still have to be in a specific relationship to each other, if they are to produce an aesthetic end-product. That is to say, in writing, as in painting, the subject matter and the means at the artist's disposal have to be properly integrated to reduce the distance between the artist's conception of his subject and his form of expression. This distance is reduced when there is a minimum of digression and when

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extraneous elements and superfluous statements are eliminated.

We already know from the visual arts that subject and subject matter are not one and the same. The Crucifixion, for example, may be used by any painter as a subject, but it is the concept of the event as expressed by a single artist, such as Tintoretto, Van Eyck, or Fra Angelico, which turns it into the subject matter. The same process applies to writing. While the event or events which the writer describes constitutes the subject, the subject matter is his attitude towards these events.

The subject in painting is the illustrative element, and the way the artist approaches his subject and turns it into the subject matter is the expressive element; he avails himself of the decorative element and the use of color, light, line, and space to reinforce his point of view. The writer works with the same general components: there is a story; there are words and patterns of words which control the sequence and spatial separation of events; and there is, underlying it all, the subject matter, which, being the embodiment of the artist's concept of his subject, ultimately dictates and directs the relationship of all other components. In other words, the writer-artist turns the raw materials at his disposal into an aesthetic experience by the same process that the painter-artist does: selection and integration.

The raw materials in painting—color, light, line, and space—have rough equivalents in writing. We can say that the color is the language, the line is the way language moves from one point to the other to connect the various events of the story, and the space is the way masses of language are placed in relationship to each other along this line to form a composition.

A work of art, in painting and in writing, has to have a form, "a plan of organization by which the details that constitute the matter are brought into relation, so that they unite to produce a single aesthetic effect."* The Barnes

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*Albert C. Barnes, *The Art in Painting,* Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., New York, 1953, p. 27.

method subjects this plan of organization to a careful examination of the details that constitute the matter. It teaches us how to see.

To show how the Barnes method can also teach us how to read, I have chosen a rather controversial piece of dramatic literature, Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot. Waiting for Godot* is a difficult play, and I don't particularly like it. Its point of view is too grim for me. It makes me feel uncomfortable. But then, I suppose, it is meant to make me feel uncomfortable. It is meant to transmit its subtle tension to me, to destroy my complacency, and to make me reevaluate held ideas.

And this brings me to an important question. Do we really have to like something in order to be able to appreciate it? To like, or to dislike, is to respond psychologically to a stimulus which may trigger hidden prejudices and/or predilections. Appreciation, on the other hand, is a learned response and derives from an aesthetic satisfaction which is the result of knowing what to look for. It involves objective criteria. Just as quality in painting is "merely another name for the successful use of the plastic means to express the artist's individual vision in terms that are objectively demonstrable,"† so does quality in writing signify the successful use of the plastic means to express the writer's individual vision in terms that are objectively demonstrable. Consequently, we should not judge the artist's vision, but only his creation.

Let us then look at Beckett's creation and subject it to a step by step analysis. The first step is to connect subject and subject matter by penetrating the surface, the illustrative element, and getting to the essence, the expressive element, and thus to Beckett's concept of the surface events. The surface events of *Waiting for Godot* are minimal. Vladimir and Estragon, who address each other affectionately as Didi and Gogo, come together at a desolate place at the crossroads of their intersecting lives to wait for someone named Godot. They reminisce about their past. They try different topics—their ailments, the

†*Ibid.*, p. 44.

Crucifixion. They tell jokes. They quarrel and they make up. They eat, they sleep. They are bored. They talk about suicide and make a feeble attempt at it. Twice, once in the first act and then again in the second, they are joined by another curious pair, Pozzo and Lucky, master and slave, respectively, in whose lives they become briefly involved. At the end of each of the two acts, a messenger arrives to tell them that Godot has postponed his coming, that they will have to go on waiting. Not much of a story, I must admit. Its subject is simply how Vladimir and Estragon pass their twenty-four hour wait for Godot in an unattractive environment.

However, if we read carefully, we realize that Beckett is not only playing with our traditional time perception but also with the classical unities and that he is doing so for a purpose. The classical unities require that a play have only one plot, take place within a twenty-four hour period, and not shift location. On the surface, *Waiting for Godot* meets all these requirements.

Yet, Vladimir and Estragon have led not only one life but many. They have had different identities. Vladimir responds to the name Mr. Albert, and Estragon gives his name as Adam. And, way back in Paris, things had been different. "We were respectable in those days," Vladimir reminisces.

And then there are time discrepancies. Lucky and Pozzo have aged too much in twenty-four hours, and the barren tree has sprouted leaves with illogical speed. The matter of time perception is a major topic of conversation between Vladimir and Estragon. Vladimir is very concerned with time patterns, while Estragon is more indifferent to them. Estragon is not very good at remembering those yesterdays and the tomorrows and, in the process of his speculations, draws the reader's attention to the fact that a much longer period of time must have elapsed than one day and one night.

Here Vladimir and Estragon are speaking about their meeting with Pozzo and Lucky, which Estragon seems to have completely forgotten.

E. Pozzo and Lucky?

V. He's forgotten everything.
E. I remember a lunatic who kicked my shins off me. Then he played the fool.
V. That was Lucky.
E. I remember that. But when was it?
V. And his keeper, do you remember him?
E. He gave me a bone.
V. That was Pozzo.
E. And all that was yesterday, you say?

And then there is the matter of the tree.

E. The tree?
V. Do you not remember?
E. I'm tired.
V. Look at it.
E. I see nothing.
V. But yesterday evening, it was all black and bare and now it's covered with leaves.
E. Leaves?
V. In a single night!
E. It must be Spring.
V. But in a single night!
E. I tell you we weren't here yesterday.

There is also the question of when exactly Godot is supposed to show up.

V. He said Saturday, I think.
E. You think?
V. I must have made a note of it.
E. But what Saturday? Or is it not rather Sunday or Monday?

Even the place, where the entire action is supposed to occur, seems to lose its identity. Here, for example, Estragon is confused as to where exactly they had seen Pozzo and Lucky.

E. Was it here, where we are now?
V. Where else do you think? Do you not recognize the place?
E. Recognize? What is there to recognize? All my lousy life I've crawled about in the mud. And you talk to me about scenery. Look at this muckheap. I've never stirred from it.

As Vladimir and Estragon assume different identities, as yesterday slips further into the past and tomorrow reaches further into the future, as the size of the muckheap expands into the world at large, where only the scenery changes but not the essence, the road which the two tramps travel stretches into infinity in both directions, until it encompasses not only a day but a whole lifetime and ultimately the collective lifetime of all mankind, caught in the act of "waiting for Godot."

V. But at this place, at this moment of time, all mankind is us, whether we like it or not. What are we doing here, that is the question? We are waiting for Godot to come.

And then "waiting for Godot" becomes the metaphor, in the largest possible sense, for existence and the meaning of existence. The question, as far as Beckett is concerned, is not "to be or not to be," for we are here and we shall survive: after all, Vladimir's and Estragon's suicide attempts are curiously inept and are not meant to succeed. The question is, What are we doing here?—a question answered time and again in a five-line duologue:

V. Nothing to be done.
E. Let's go.
V. We can't.
E. Why not?
V. We are waiting for Godot.

If the plot of *Waiting for Godot* is minimal—and indeed it is—it is an outgrowth of the author's concept of his subject: we lead a marginal existence without great meaning; life, as a whole, is not a monumental experience but, rather, a series of minor events, a succession of small ups and downs, a preoccupation with keeping busy, with making time pass; it is mostly the coming together of solitary figures who form relationships for their own benefit and who develop an interdependence, because there is no outside source to rely on. We talk, we sleep, we eat. And we are silent. Through these silences a tension emerges, the need for an explanation to the question: What are we really doing here? We want to know how we

fit into the scheme of things, and, in the absence of that explanation, we want something to happen, some redeeming act which will justify our existence and elevate it from mere survival to living with a capital L. To some degree, all of us are waiting for Godot.

Who, then, is Godot? Is he, as some have suggested, the God figure, or is he, as others have suggested, the Uncle Godeau, the *deux ex machina,* who appears at the end of the Balzac play *Mercadet* to set, as everyone had expected him to do all along, everything right? Or is he different things to different people? It has been reported that in 1964 an audience in Warsaw, Poland, perceived him as "national independence," and a group of convicts at San Quentin, where The Theatre Workshop performed the play, as "release from prison". And is it really important who Godot is, whether or not he exists, whether or not he will show up? He is, to be sure, a vague hope, an aspiration, but above all, he is an excuse to stick around, a justification for man's instinct for survival. Let's go. We can't. We are waiting for Godot.

Ultimately, it is up to Vladimir and Estragon to decide what they will do while they are waiting, and, incidentally, the French title, the original title, *"En attendant Godot"*—"While waiting for Godot"—conveys this idea much more clearly. Vladimir and Estragon have to take charge of their own lives the best way they know.

If Vladimir and Estragon are all of us, they carry within them a representative assortment of human traits. Vladimir is rational, prosaic, cerebral, curious. Estragon is intuitive, poetic, corporeal, accepting. They are, in their polarity, two sides of the same coin, representing the mind and the body in the literary tradition of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza and the philosophy of the division of spirit and matter of Descartes. But, for the purpose of their creator, Beckett, they are reduced, as is everything else in the play, to the lowest possible denominator—the tramp, who lives one of the most marginal of all existences. And the road which the two tramps travel, and which is the age-worn metaphor for life, has been used by Beckett with

such elasticity that it has room not only for the hobo who jumps the freight train, but also for the passenger who travels first-class.

But Vladimir and Estragon are not only voyagers, they are also entertainers. They have to make time pass by amusing themselves and each other, just as they make time pass for us, the audience, with their antics on the stage.

And this brings us to another crucial metaphor—the world as a stage on which everyone becomes yet another performer. In the case of Vladimir and Estragon, and in accordance with Beckett's procedure of reducing everything in the play to the lowest possible denominator, the stage is the British music hall, and Vladimir and Estragon are entertainers of minimal stature, a combination of circus clown and vaudevillian, whose brittle duologues remind us of a Smith and Dale routine. The comic-tragic aspect of the clown who, in the old cliche, is laughing on the outside while crying on the inside, is reinforced by the comic rapid-fire cross talk, which is intended to cover up, to keep the characters from thinking about the seriousness of their predicament.

Waiting for Godot is, on all levels, what its author intended it to be—a tragic farce or a tragicomedy, a shattering of the deception of outside appearances, a recognition of the mask which hides the truth.

Vladimir and Estragon, the clowns, spend most of the first act being entertained by a fellow circus performer. Pozzo is clearly the ringmaster who cracks the whip, tames the animals, and is judged by the degree to which he succeeds in making his creatures do his bidding. Pozzo's cruel harassment of Lucky is to Estragon and Vladimir just another act, a performance, and most important of all, it is a relief from the necessity for self-entertainment. "Reinforcements at last," cries Vladimir when he sees the pair coming. "Now we'll make it through the day. We were beginning to weaken."

Once the performance has started, Vladimir and Estragon become the epitome of theatre goers, and their intermission chatter has a familiar ring to it:

V. Charming evening we are having.
E. Unforgettable.
V. And it's not over.
E. Apparently not.
V. It's only beginning.

And a little later:

V. (on the way to the bathroom) I'll be back.
E. End of the corridor, to the left.
V. Keep my seat.

But each theatre goer, appreciative as he may be, is also a critic:

E. It's awful
V. Worse than the pantomime
E. The circus
V. The music-hall

On the other hand, Pozzo is the perfect ham, basking in the limelight.

P. Is everybody looking at me? Is everybody listening? Is everybody ready?

And he is very much concerned with audience reaction:

How did you find me? Good? Fair? Middling? Poor? Positively bad? . . . . . I have such need for encouragement.

Because Pozzo wants applause so badly, Vladimir and Estragon at first assure him that he gave a good performance, but eventually Vladimir does admit that he has seen better.

The cage in which Pozzo and Lucky perform their animal-taming routine is actually only a smaller version of the stage, with its invisible bars, on which Vladimir, Estragon, and everyone of us play out our roles. Just as we can't stop the world to get off, as our only exit from it is through death into oblivion, the stage, with its wings, is, in a sense, the only place where the actor is alive. Once he leaves the proscenium, he is no longer on. Estragon is kept from rushing offstage when he becomes frightened at the prospect of meeting Godot face to face by Vladimir's sharp reminder: "Imbecile, there is no way out."

We have thus seen how the subject matter, Beckett's

interpretation of what existence is all about, has surfaced in the subject, Vladimir and Estragon's trivial activities while waiting for Godot, via the use of two metaphors—namely, that "life is a road" and that "the world is a stage." These two metaphors are linked by Pozzo when he tries to identify the piece of road on which the protagonists meet and asks: "Isn't this by any chance the place known as the Board?"

The metaphor, from an artistic point of view, is a transferred value which serves to enrich and diversify our perception. It endows a situation with qualities which have been borrowed from another source. Some metaphors, however, are age-worn, tired, without luster. It is the way in which Beckett uses them that infuses them with new life, that turns the warmed-up chicken into a chicken croquette.

The "road of life" is conceived by Beckett not merely as a straight line which leads from the cradle to the grave. It is an elastic road, which eventually curves, as everything in the play does, under the weight of collective humanity and under the endless cycle of births and deaths, until it becomes a circle, where each life is but a point, or as Pozzo puts it more poetically, "a light which gleams an instant." The road thus assumes the shape of the globe, of the world we live in. We can't stop it. We can't get off. We are trapped. But the things we do "while waiting for Godot" make the voyage bearable. Occasionally we get tired and discouraged, but we know that the show must go on. We are actors who play our parts, preferably with a smile, according to our own script, without any visible evidence that our audience includes a presence other than that of our fellow performers. Life is, in other words, uncertain, confining, minimal, and redundant; but mankind, a group of seasoned troupers, has learned to cope.

However, a metaphor alone, though skillfully applied, does not make a work of art. A work of art has to make effective use of the means at its creator's disposal to reinforce the nucleus of ideas which he wishes to convey.

Just as color is the fundamental plastic means in painting, so are words the fundamental plastic means in writing.

And, just as in painting a color assumes meaning only in a relationship with other colors, so do words assume meaning only in a relationship with other words. Beckett himself makes a powerful statement to that effect through Lucky's speech in the first act. When Lucky is instructed by his master Pozzo to "think," he launches into an attempt to repeat sounds, words, terms, and cliches which he had picked up along the way. But, because he fails to put them together in the appropriate order, in meaningful relationships, what he has to say does not make sense.

Words not only must stand in the appropriate relationship to each other to convey meaning, they also have to support the unifying nucleus of ideas. If they fail to do so, we are dissatisfied with the end-result. In that case, the aesthetic significance of the entire work is reduced or lost altogether. Elaborate language for its own sake, without reference to the subject matter, becomes pedantic, academic, stilted. "It is verbal magic destitute of meaning."*

Beckett's use of language is austere, devoid of frilly adjectives. It fits the austerity of his own vision and blends in with his grand design. Decoration would ill befit the barren topography of Vladimir's and Estragon's outer and inner world.

When words are strung together, they form a line. In accordance with the theme of *Waiting for Godot,* the words are strung along in such a manner that they function mainly to break the silence and to fend off thought. The line along which the words move never reaches dizzying heights and never takes sudden plunges. It moves, just as, in Beckett's view, life does, rather steadily, with small ups and downs, yet with a constantly changing rhythm. Silences, while devoid of words, nevertheless emit subtle chords of communication. They communicate, in the case of *Waiting for Godot,* an unbearable tension within the protagonists which has to be resolved by a renewal of some sort of verbal activity.

**Ibid,* p. 67.

The rhythm of the line in the play goes something like this: "Nothing to be done." Silence. Tension. "What shall we do now?" Transfer of tension to verbal activity. More dialogue. Wind-down. "That passed the time." "We always find something to do." Momentary satisfaction. Silence. Tension. "Nothing to be done."

Beckett's skillful arrangement of masses along a line brings to mind a "string of widely spaced beads, each bead containing a cluster of sentences and each cluster containing a new arrangement of words drawn from an austerely limited vocabulary and set in an austerely compressed syntax."*

Some of the beads contain dialogues, others monologues or speeches, but most of them contain, in some form or other, duologue routines carried out in the rhythmic, carefully cadenced talk of music hall comedians. However, these routines are not remarkable in their similarity; they are remarkable in their variety—and we all know how important variety within unity is for aesthetic satisfaction.

There are, for example, duologues which simply reflect in words the silent habit of clowns who, for the amusement of the circus audience, imitate each other's every move.

V. Say "I am happy."
E. I am happy
V. So am I
E. So am I
V. We are happy
E. We are happy

This is the so-called echo-routine and, of course, pure slapstick. But there are other duologues which have more serious implications. They are a sort of self-exploration, in which the speaker really does not expect an answer from his partner, but rather from himself.

Here, for instance, Vladimir and Estragon are talking about Godot.

E. What exactly did we ask him for?
V. Were you not sure?
E. I can't have been listening.

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*Katherine Worth, *Beckett the Shape Changer,* Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1975, p. 17.

V. Oh—nothing very definite.
E. A kind of prayer.
V. Precisely.
E. A vague supplication.
V. Exactly.
E. And what did he reply?
V. That he'd see.
E. That he couldn't promise anything.

If we leave out Vladimir's part in the duologue and only read Estragon's lines, we can readily see that Vladimir was really not needed, that Estragon had given all his own answers. In the matter of metaphysical speculation, everyone has to supply his own conclusions.

However, nothing serious can hold Estragon's attention for very long. Soon the duologue of the vaudevillians turns from the serious to the farcical, and the routine ends in the usual can-you-top-this fashion:

V. That he'd have to think it over.
E. In the quiet of his home.
V. Consult his family.
E. His friends
V. His agents
E. His correspondents
V. His books
E. His bank account
V. Before taking a decision.
E. It's the normal thing. Is it not?
V. I think it is.
E. I think so too.

Other duologues head in the opposite direction, from the ordinary to the metaphysical, from the prosaic to the poetic. Here, for instance, Estragon and Vladimir congratulate each other on their ability to shut out unpleasant thoughts by keeping up their easy chatter.

E. In the meantime, let's try and converse calmly, since we're incapable of keeping silent.
V. You're right, we are inexhaustible.
E. It's so we won't think.
V. We have that excuse.
E. It's so we won't hear.
V. We have our reason.

As the rhythm of the above duologue intensifies, a lyrical quality is introduced into the pattern; and, if we chose to have Vladimir and Estragon speak with one voice, if we run their lines together, we have a soliloquy which reads like a poem:

> All the dead voices
> They make a noise like wings, like sand, like leaves
> They all speak together, each one to itself
> Rather they whisper, they rustle, they murmur, they rustle
> What do they say? They talk about their lives
> To have lived is not enough for them. They have to talk about it.
> To be dead is not enough for them. They have to talk about it.

Vladimir and Estragon, combined into the Everyman, wonder about those who have preceded them and the meaning of their lives. Is it enough merely to have lived?

All these beads eventually form two circles—Act I and Act II—which start and end with approximately the same words. The circle, as we have already seen, performs an important function in conveying Beckett's attitude towards existence by reinforcing what he has to say about redundancy and entrapment. It appears in many different guises and is also present in Vladimir's song, which serves as an introduction to the second act and tells about the dog that came into the kitchen—

> and stole a crust of bread
> then cook up with a ladle
> and beat him till he was dead
> then all the dogs came running
> and dug the dog a tomb
> and wrote upon the tombstone
> for the eyes of dogs to come
> A dog came in the kitchen
> etc. etc. etc.

It is the story of yet another redundant life, a dog's life, the kind of life that Vladimir and Estragon are familiar with.

Although Act II is a repetition of Act I—as probably Act

III would be a repetition of Act II if *Waiting for Godot* had a third act—it is a repetition with a difference, variety within unity, asymmetry within a symmetrical pattern. Act I is paced at a faster rate; and Estragon and Vladimir are less at a loss for things to do, because almost from the beginning Pozzo and Lucky are there to entertain them. In the second act, Pozzo and Lucky show up only towards the end. The wait is more tedious, talk becomes more difficult, the silences are longer, the opportunity for thinking, unwelcome as it is, increases. Besides, Pozzo and Lucky have aged, they are has-beens, their act is over. Yet they have stuck it out together, through Lucky's protests and Pozzo's threats to get rid of him, just as Vladimir and Estragon have stuck it out together in spite of the polarity of their characters.

There are two equivalent, though very different, beads—one in Act I, the other in Act II—which contain monologues by Lucky and Vladimir as thinkers. However, in Act I, Lucky's attempt at thinking turns out to be not only meaningless, but also unoriginal. Lucky tries to find meaning by repeating what Puncher, Wattman, and the Messrs. Feckham, Peckham, Fulham, and Clapham had said about the relationship of man to God; and he ends up sounding like the broken record of Western thought which, being based on speculation, has failed to make sense. In Act II, Vladimir tries to reach his individual conclusion by a different approach. He is willing to confine himself to the only relationship which man can define without speculation—his relationship to his fellowmen:

> Let us not waste our time in idle discourse. Let us do something while we have the chance. It is not every day that we are needed. Not indeed that we are personally needed. . . . . To all mankind they were addressed, those cries of help ringing in our ears. But at this place, at this moment of time, all mankind is us, whether we like it or not. Let us make the best of it before it is too late. Let us represent worthily for once the foul brood to which a cruel fate consigned us.

In a sense, Vladimir is very much a part of the foul brood to which a cruel fate has consigned him: he is wrapped up in his thoughts, while Pozzo is crying pitifully for help. All talk and no action. His speech, with its flavor of pomposity, is both a self-affirmation and a self-indictment. Not only had man failed to live up to his responsibility in the past, but he continues to do so.

But whether Godot exists or not, whether he will come or not, whether he will set everything right, man still has to rely on himself. He is, in a very real sense, his own best hope, his own salvation. Life is hard, but man and mankind have stuck it out. "We have kept our appointment," Vladimir affirms. "We are not saints, but we have kept our appointment." And that is the message which he ultimately sends Godot, whom he may never see, not today, not tomorrow, nor the tomorrow after. "What shall I tell him?" Godot's emissary asks. "Tell him you saw me," replies Vladimir. And again at the end of Act II and this time, I imagine, in a firmer tone, "Tell him you saw me."

Man may be unable to escape from the treadmill of the circular road he travels or through the invisible bars of the stage on which he performs, but he rises above his predicament by his capacity for hope and his fierce determination to assert himself and to prevail, to "keep his appointment."

This, then, is Beckett's concept of existence and mankind's precarious position and the theme of his play *Waiting for Godot.* Whether we agree with his vision and whether we like what he had to say have, however, little relevance to our evaluation of the merits of his creation. *Waiting for Godot,* when analyzed with the help of the Barnes method, generates considerable aesthetic satisfaction, and we are able to appreciate Beckett's formidable accomplishment. He has molded his vision into "a form, a plan of organization by which the details that constitute the matter are brought into relation so that they unite to produce a single aesthetic effect"* and thus created not merely a play, but a piece of art which is worthy of being called literature.

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*Albert C. Barnes, *op. cit.* p. 27.

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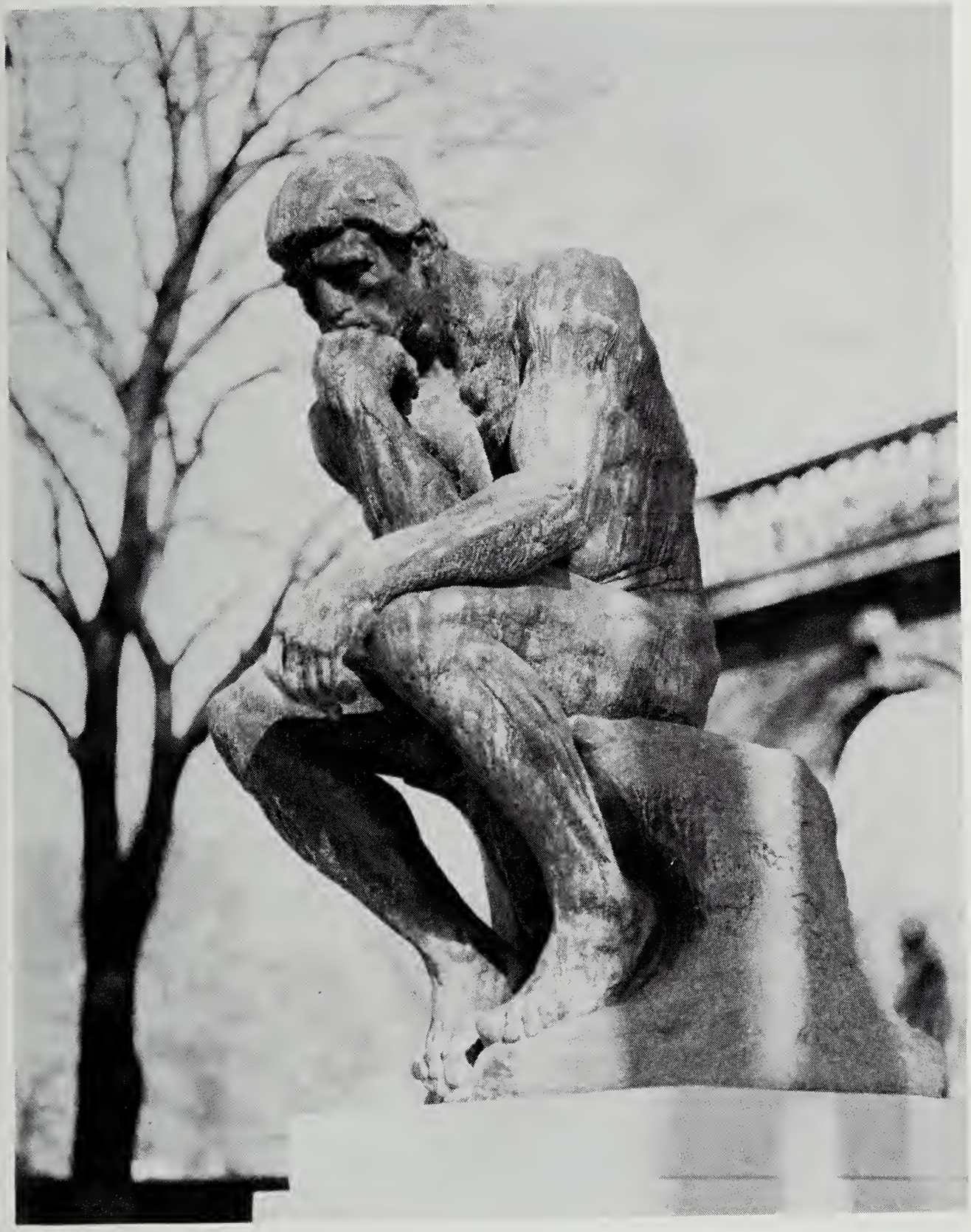
PLATE 1



Rodin

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PLATE 2

Italian, thirteenth century

Madonna and Child
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PLATE 3

Cimabue

Madonna and Child
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PLATE 4

Giotto

Madonna and Child
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Antonello da Messina

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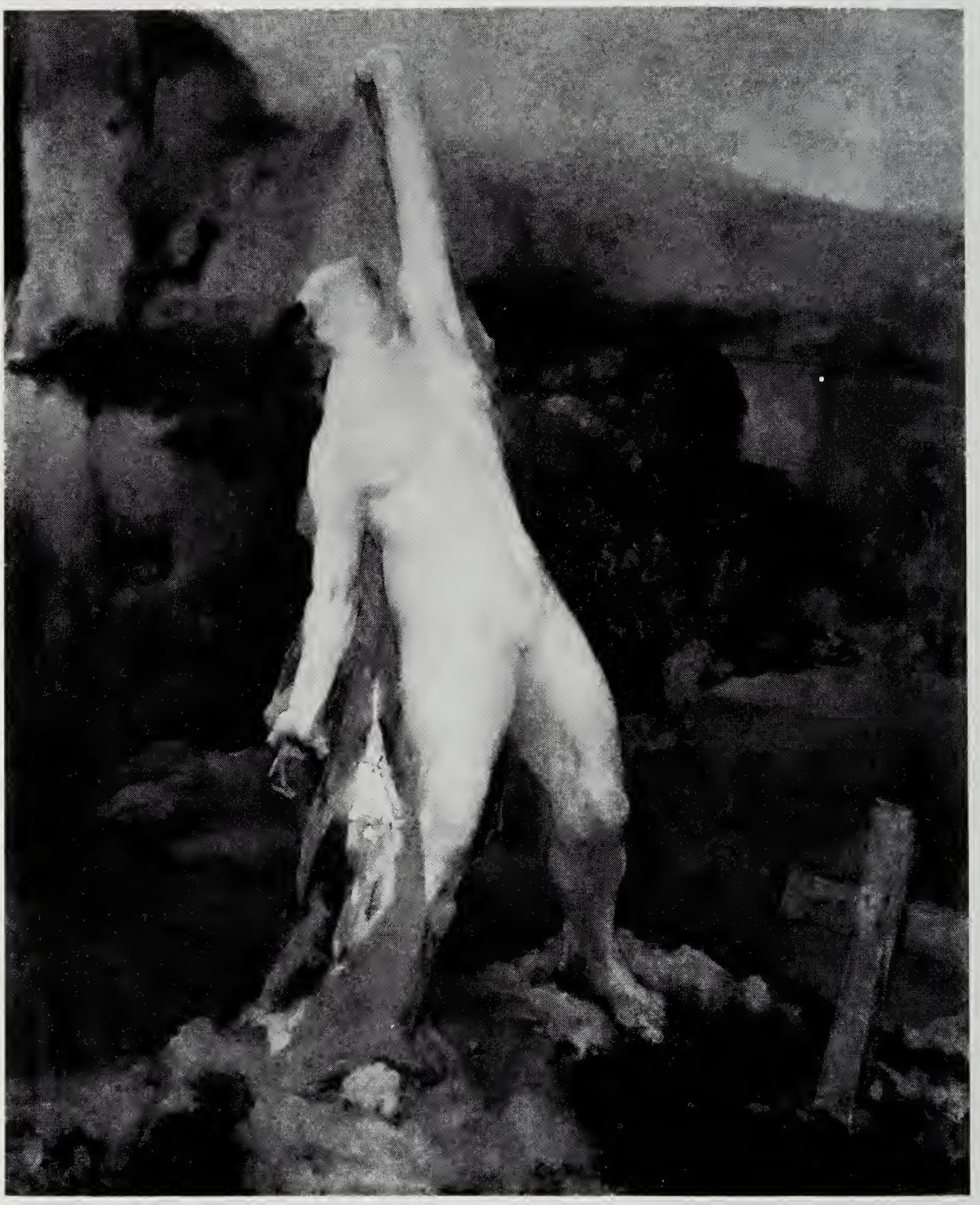

Arthur B. Carles

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PLATE 8

Henri Rousseau

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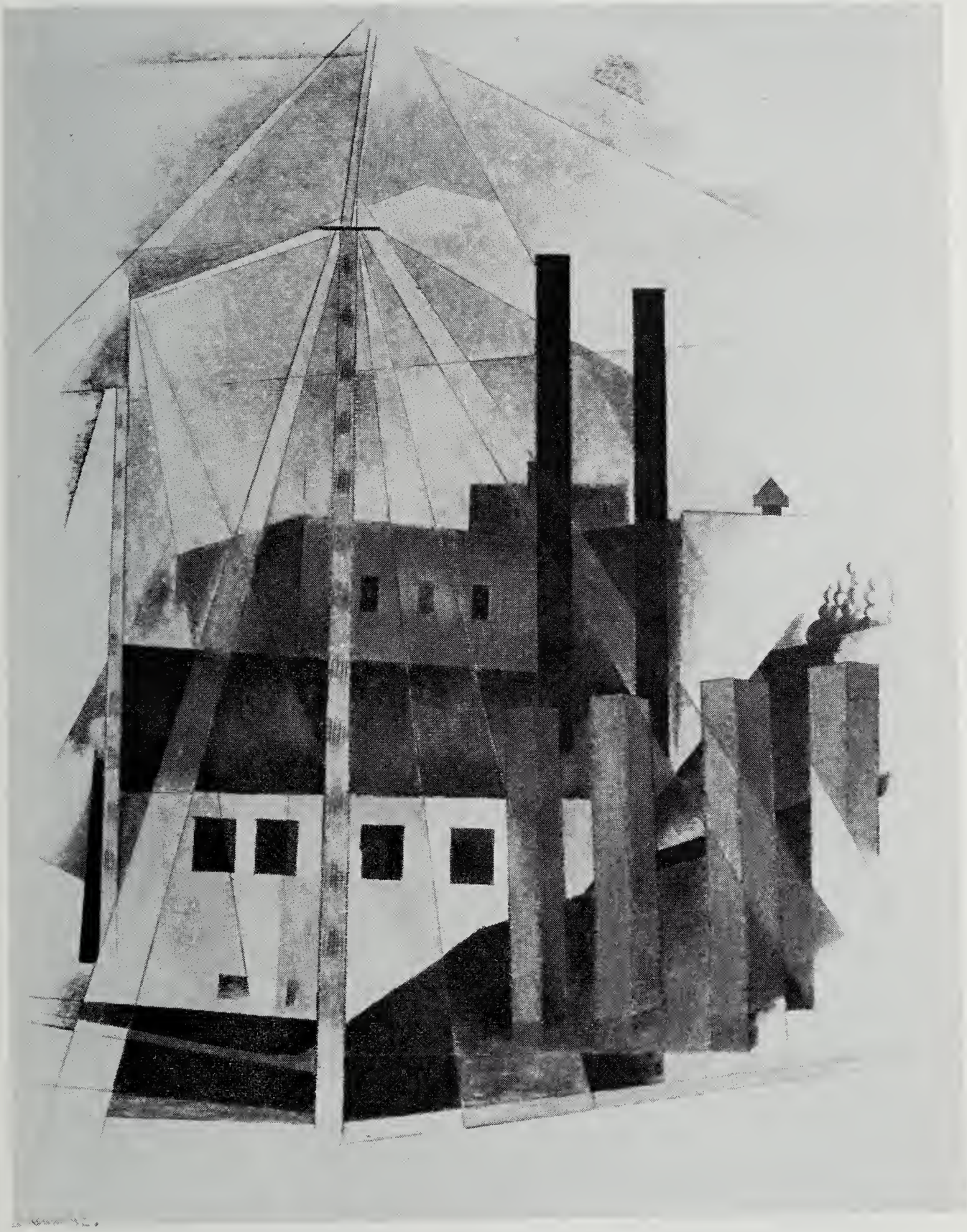

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Ingres

The Spring
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PLATE 11

Renoir

The Spring
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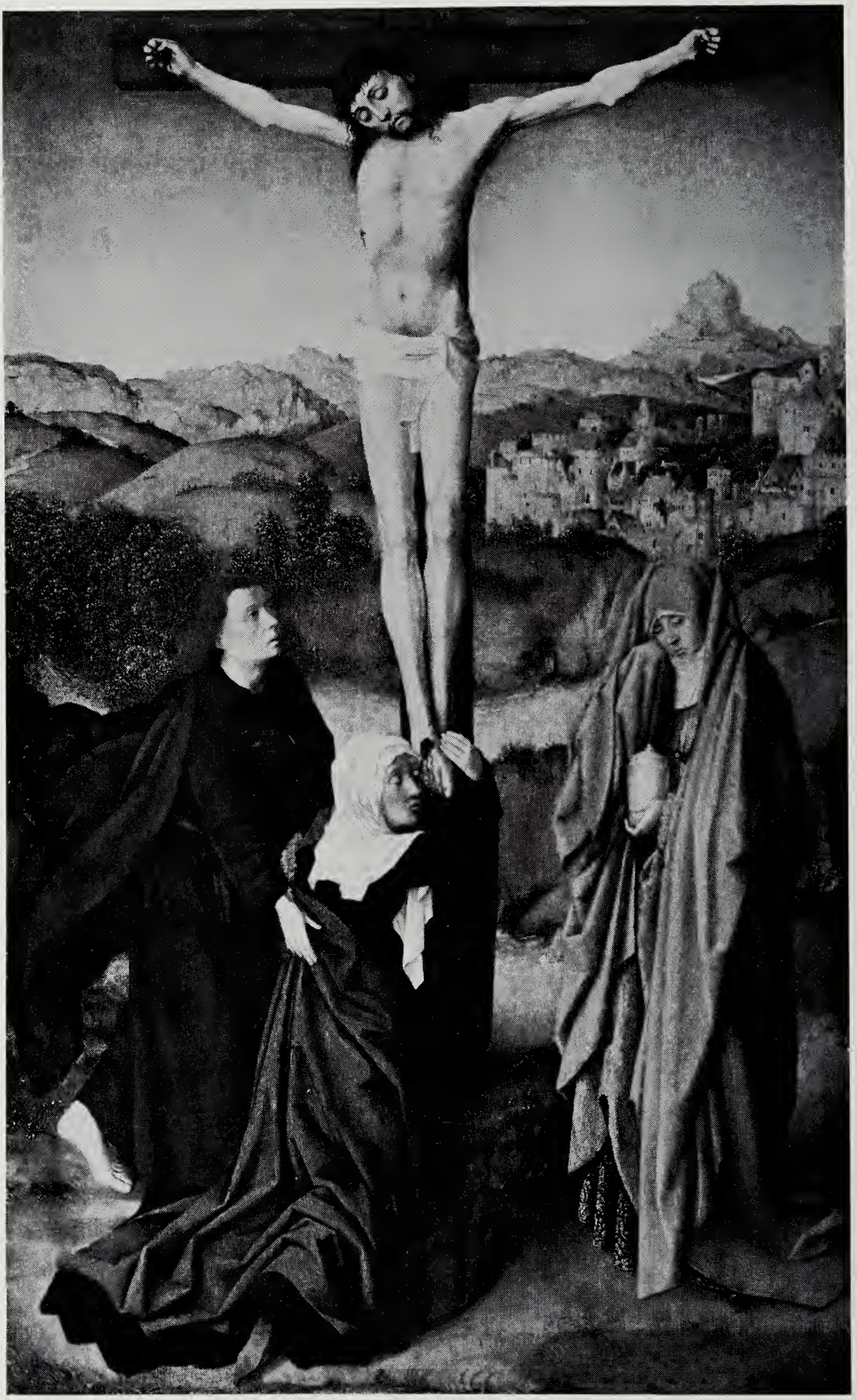

Gerard David

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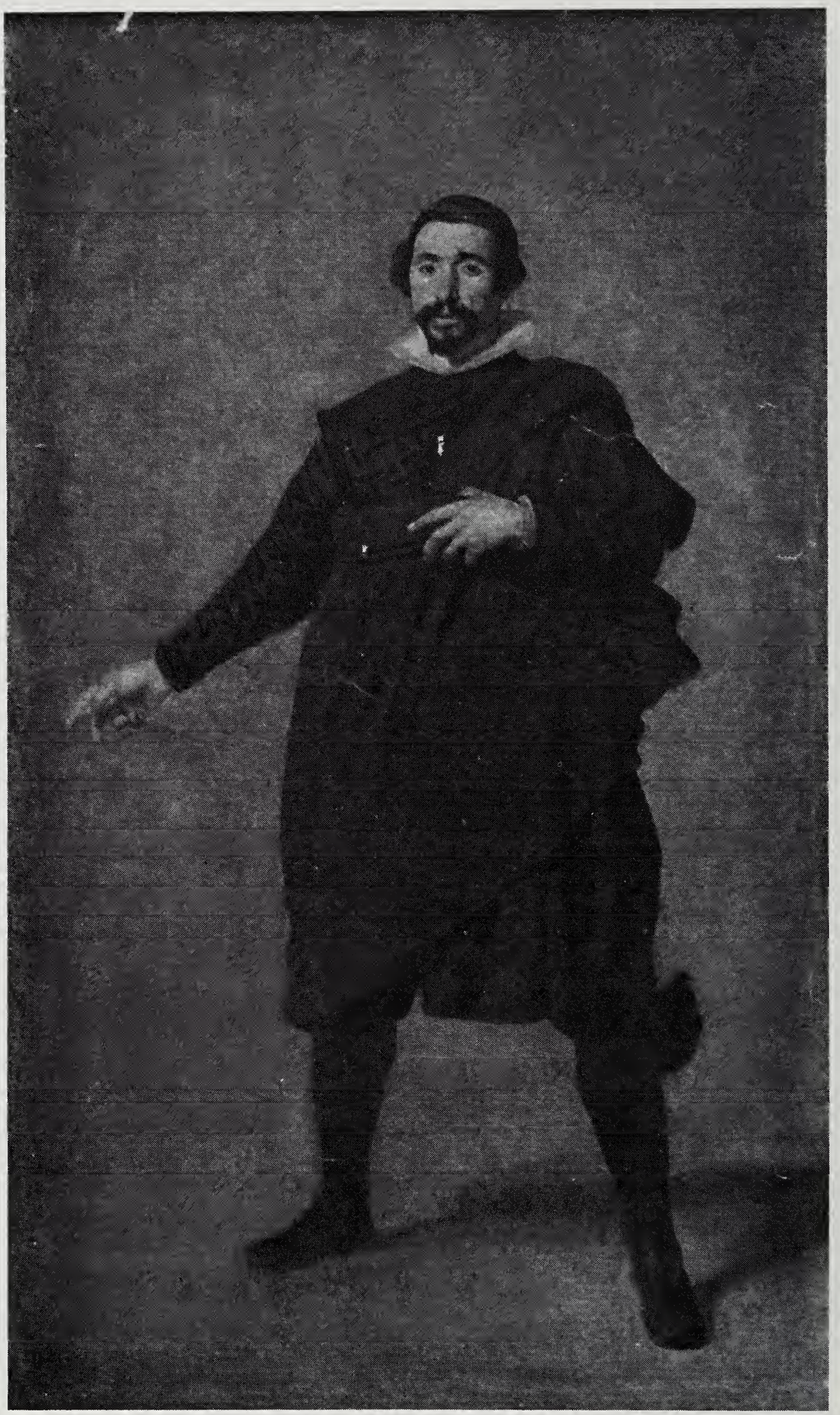
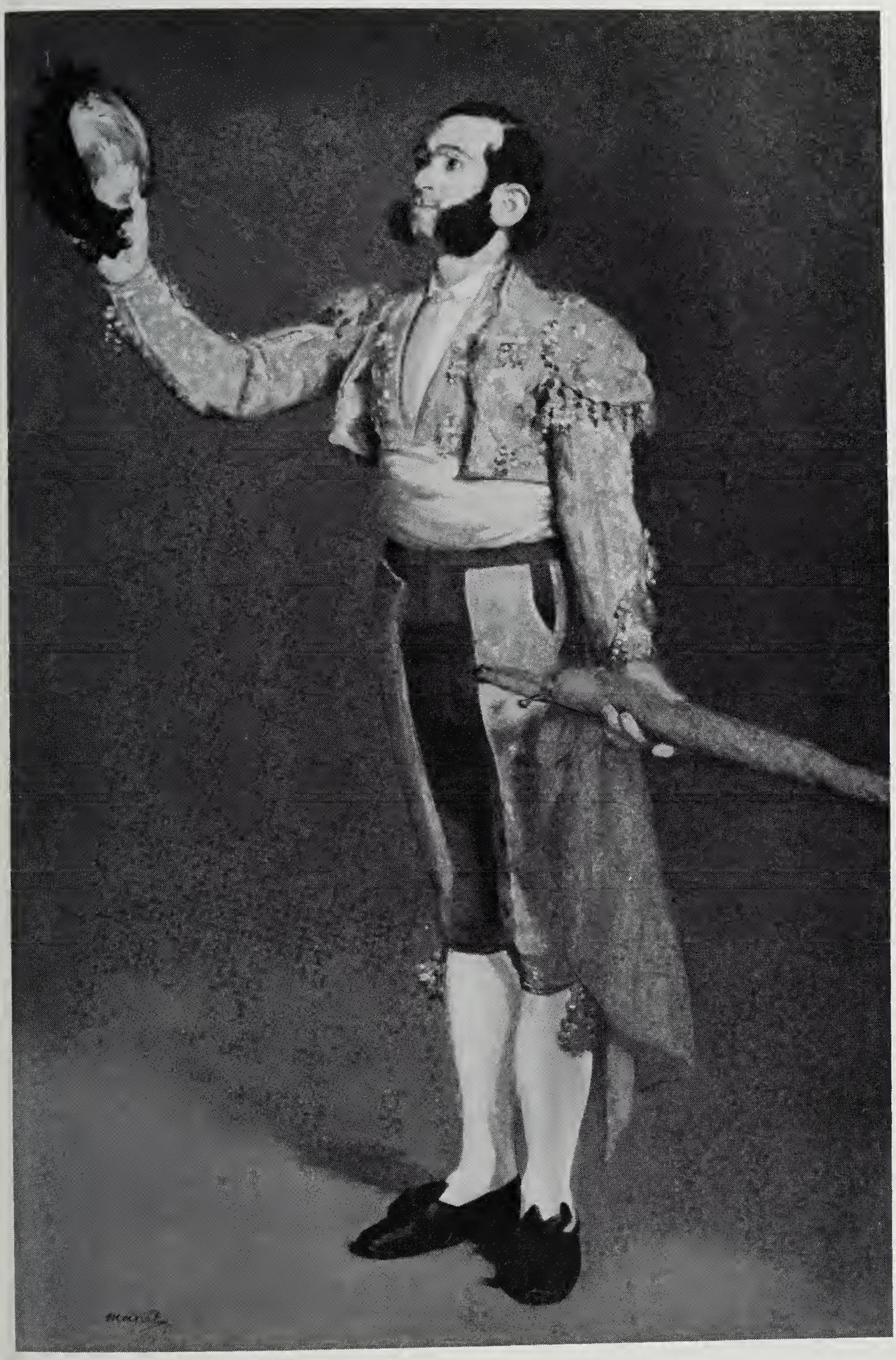


Velásquez

Portrait of a Buffoon of Philip IV
(Copyright © Museo del Prado, Madrid)—Page 20 ftn

PLATE 17



Manet

Torero Saluting
(The Metropolitan Museum
of Art, New York)—Pages 20 ftn, 27

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Manet

Lilacs and Roses
(Private Collection, New York)—Pages 17, 29, 32

PLATE 19

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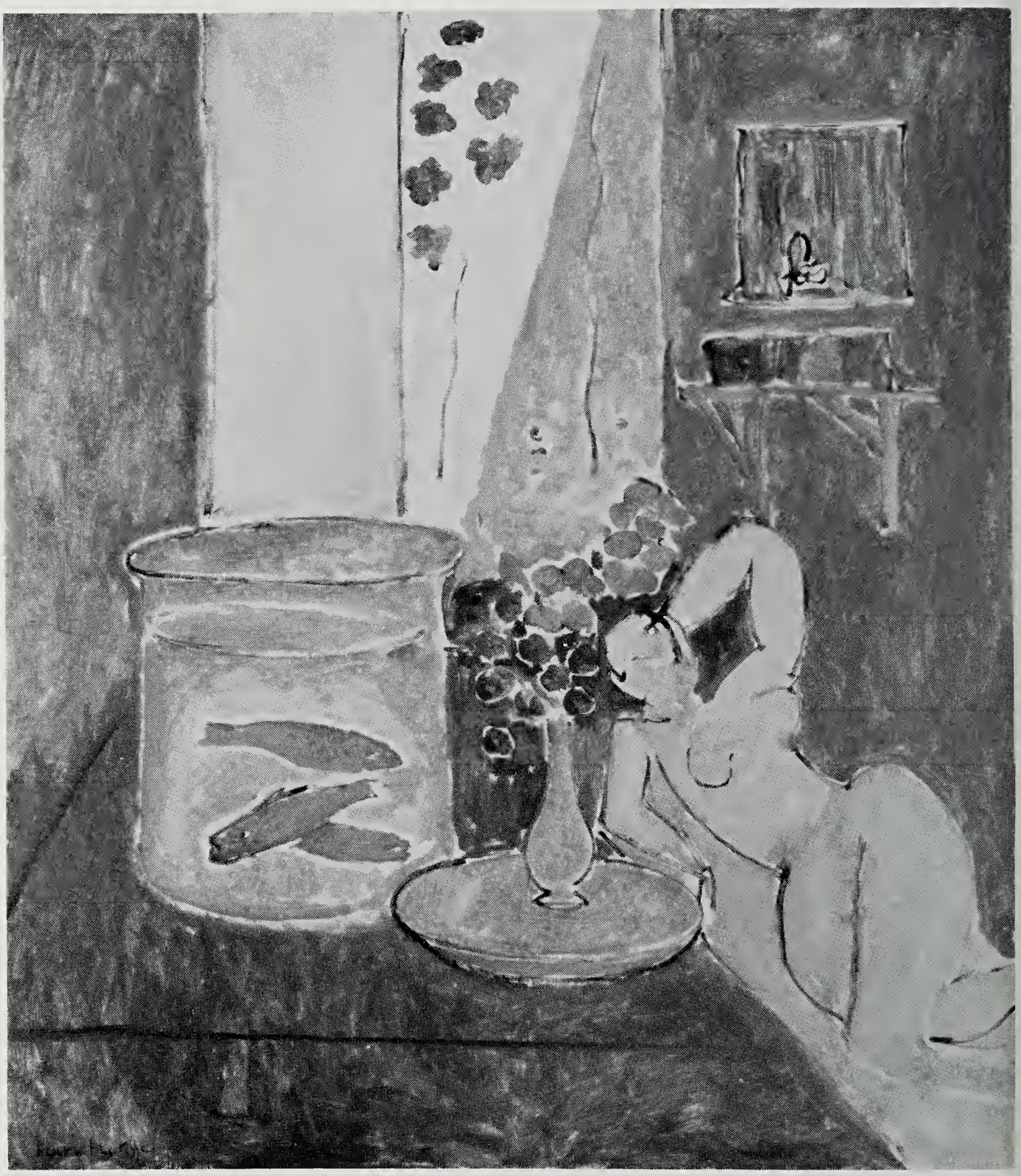
Flowers in Pitcher
—Pages 16–17, 24

PLATE 20



Matisse

Goldfish and Sculpture (1911)
(Oil on canvas, 46″ × 39⅝″—Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John Hay Whitney)—Pages 21–22, 23–24, 31 ftn

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Interior with Goldfish
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Standing Odalisque
—Page 30 ftn

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PLATE 25

Matisse

Red Rug
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PLATE 26

Matisse

Goldfish
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Matisse

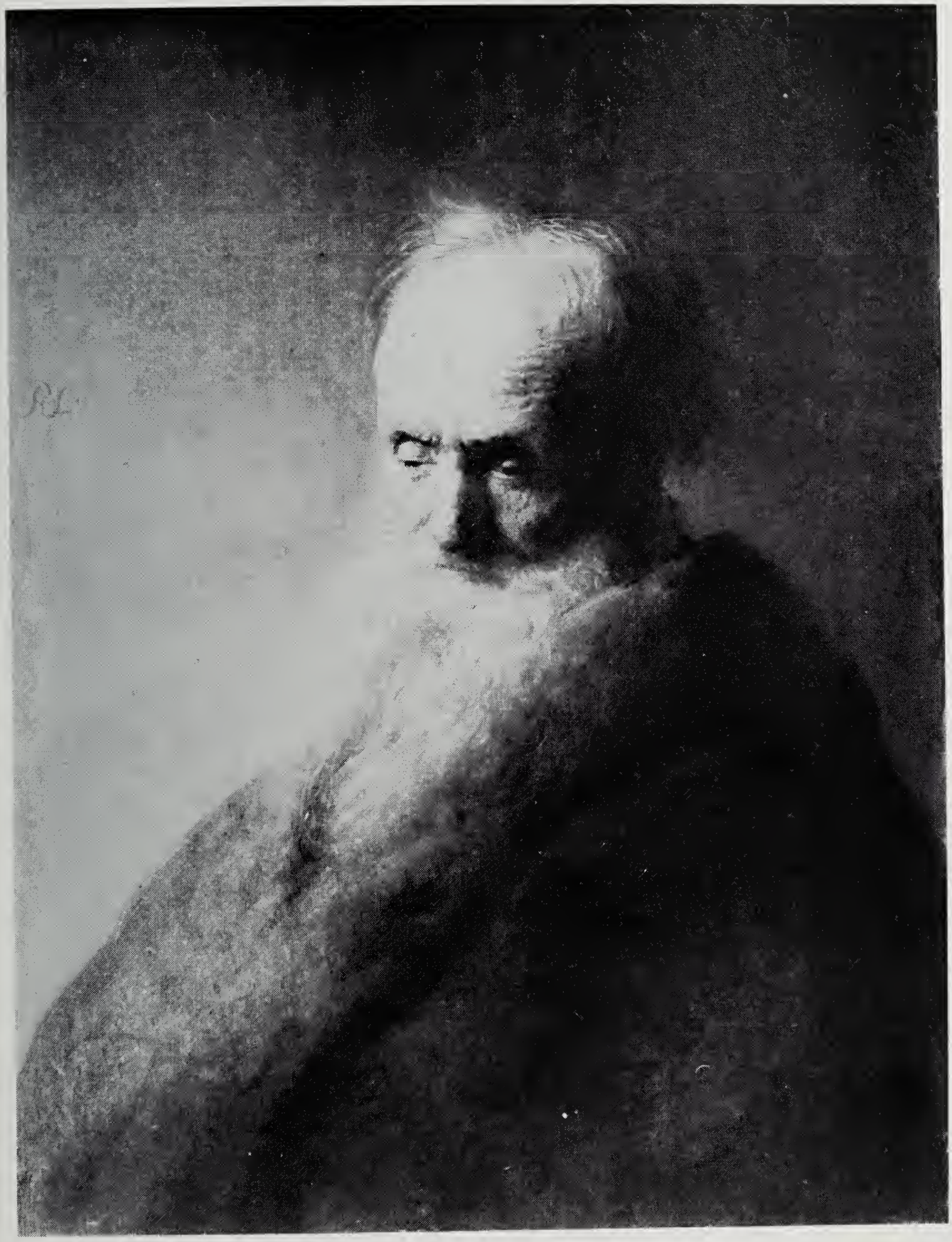
Large Red Interior
(Photograph, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris)—Pages 35–36

PLATE 28

Van Gogh

Portrait of Dr. Gachet
(Private New York Collector)—Page 39

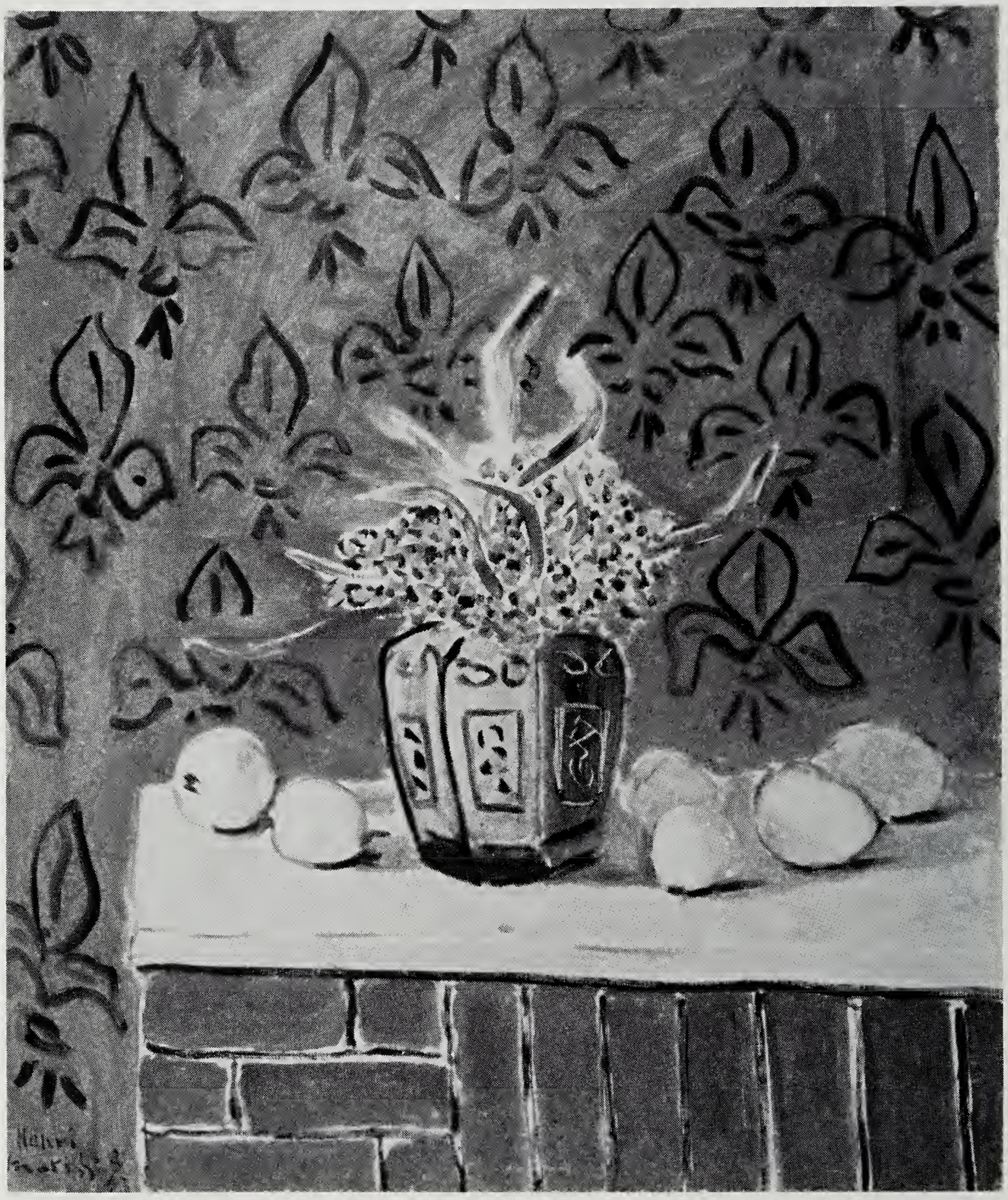
PLATE 29



Rembrandt

Old Man
(Staatliches Museum,
Schwerin)—Page 29

PLATE 30



Matisse

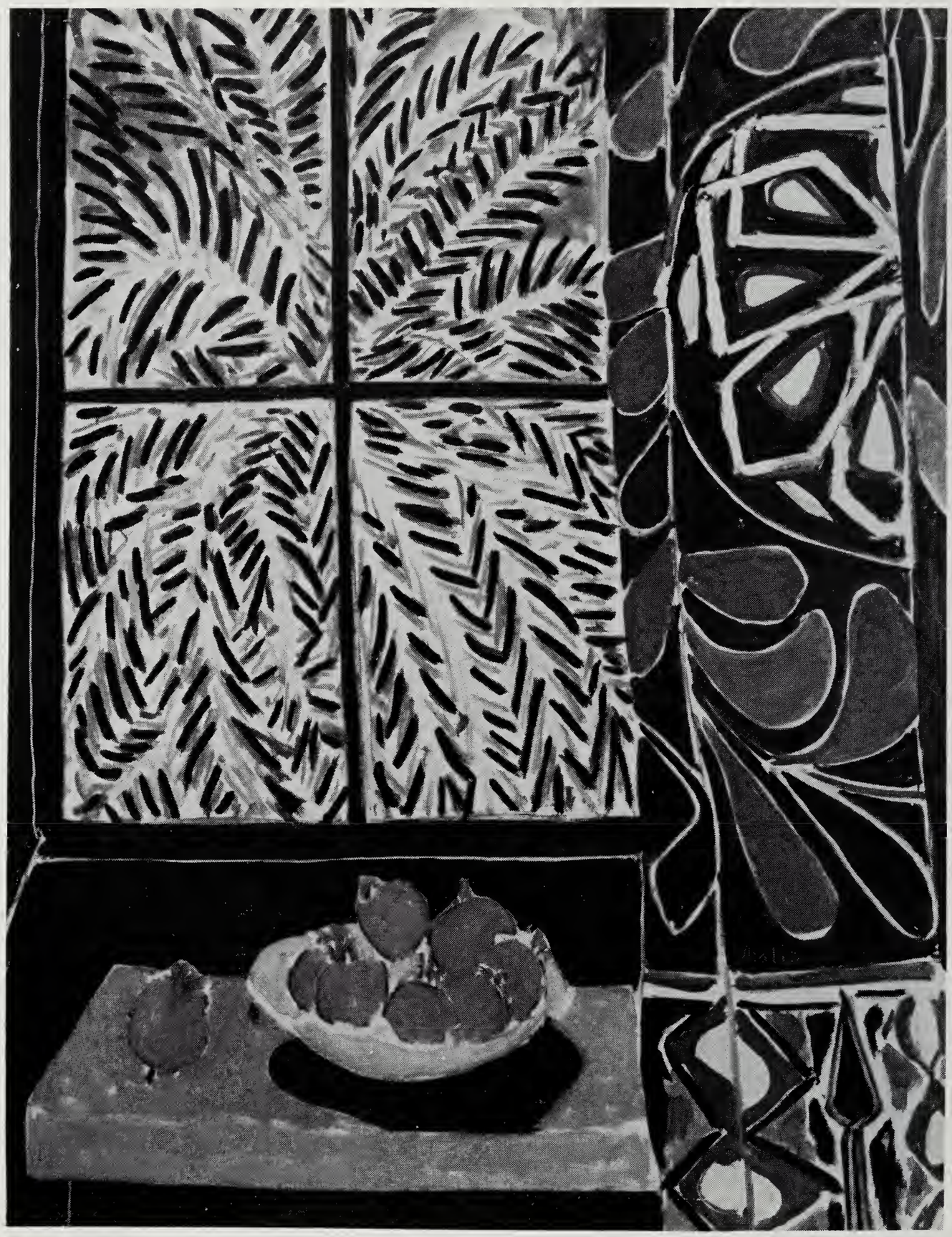
Lemons Against a Fleur-de-lis Background (1943, March)
(Oil on canvas, $28\frac{7}{8}'' \times 24\frac{1}{4}''$. Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Loula D. Lasker Bequest)—Pages 34–35

PLATE 31

Matisse

Music Lesson
—Pages 7, 12

PLATE 32



Matisse

Interior with Egyptian Curtain
(The Phillips Collection,
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Matisse

Pineapple
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Korean, sixteenth century

Philosopher, Tiger and Child
—Page 31 ftn

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Two Women
—Page 26

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Matisse

Still Life with Bust
—Pages 24–26, 34, 36

PLATE 37

Matisse

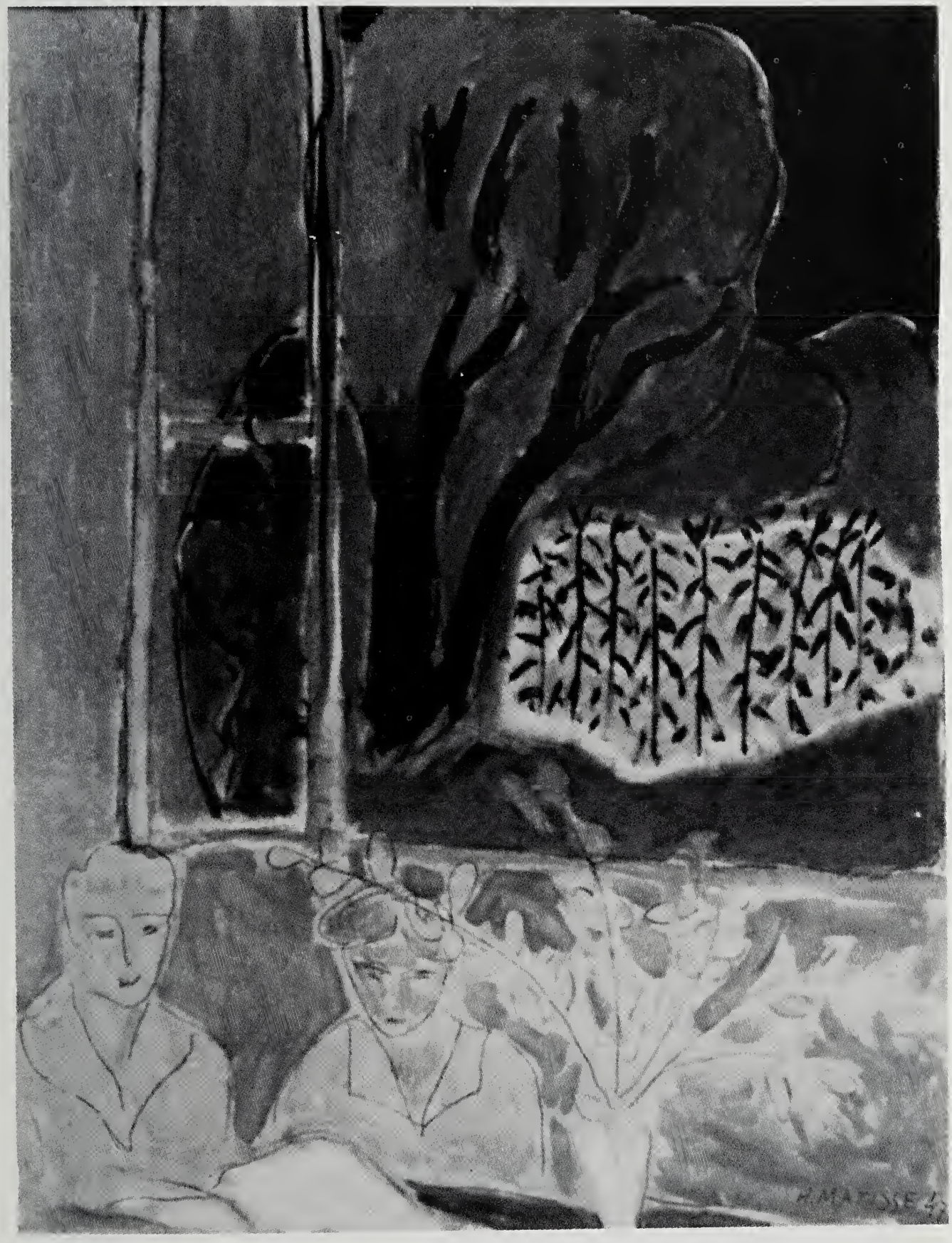
Altered photograph of *Still Life with Bust* (Plate 36)
—Page 25

PLATE 38

Matisse

Two Women in Interior (Red and Yellow Setting)
—Page 12

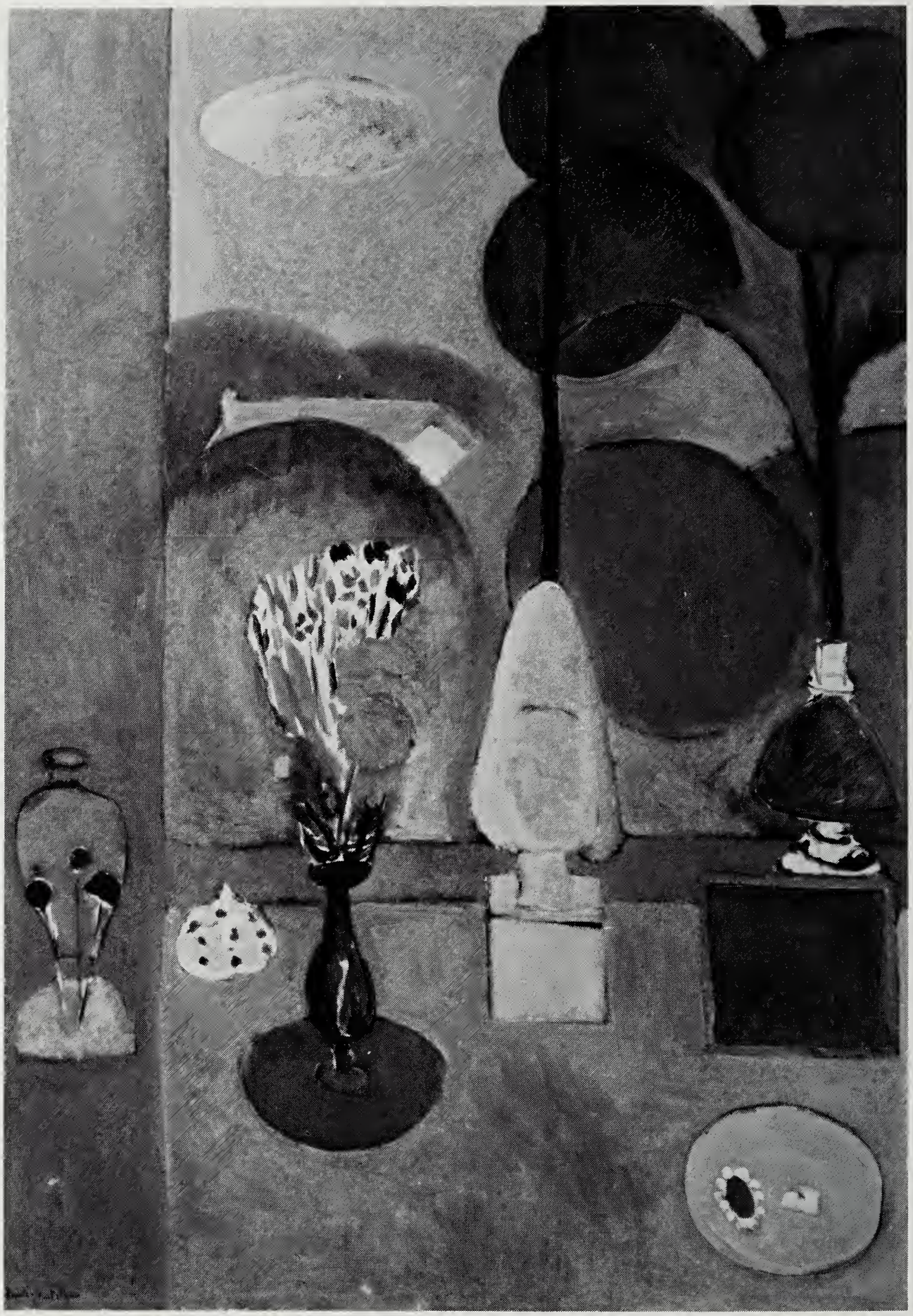
PLATE 39



Matisse

Two Women in Interior (Blue and Yellow Garden)
—Page 12

PLATE 40



Matisse

The Blue Window
(Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund)—Pages 23–24, 23 ftn

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Toyokuni

Figure in Front of Bridge
—Page 29

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Cézanne

Still Life with Ginger Jar
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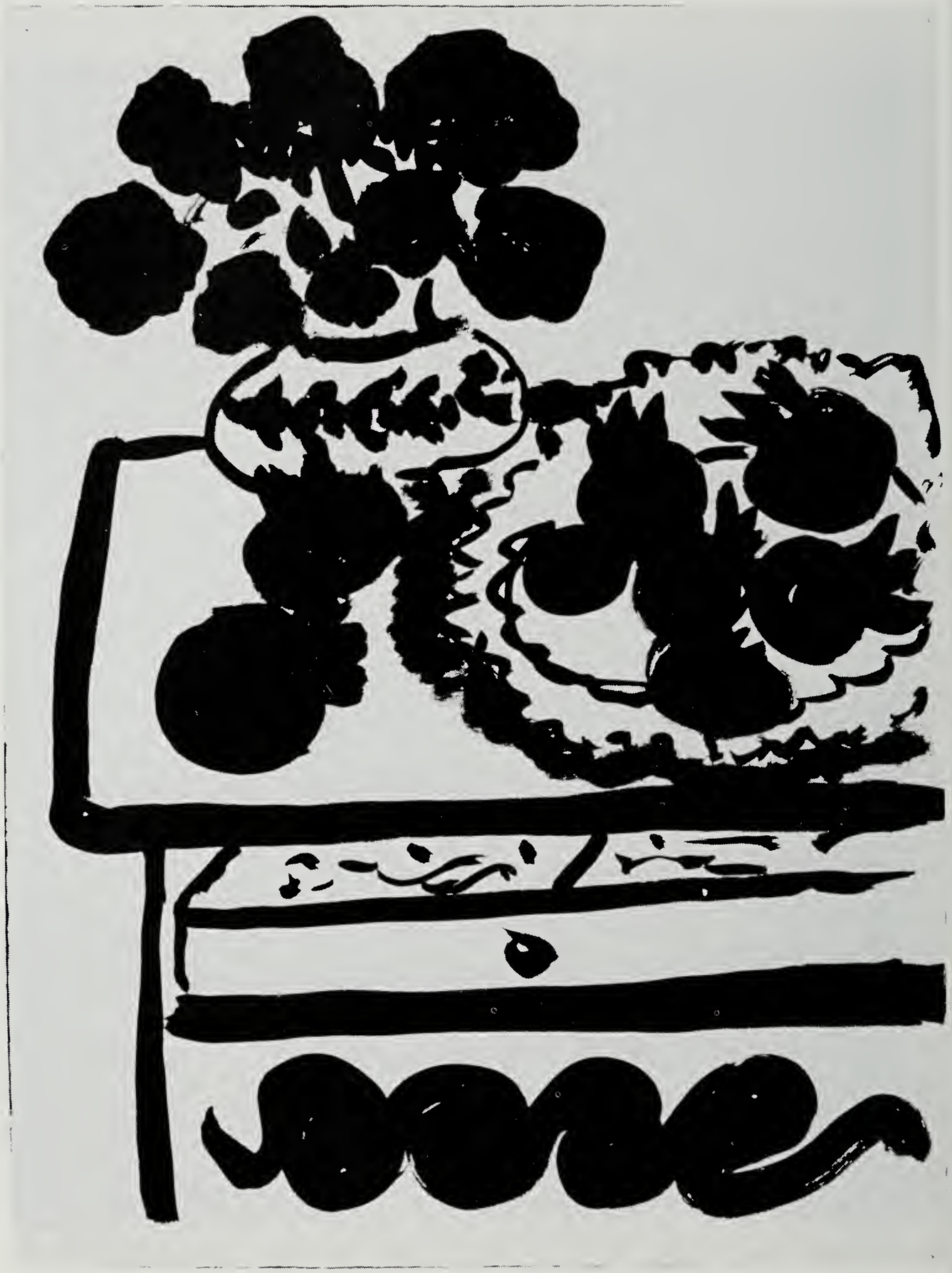
Tintoretto

A Venetian Senator
—Page 18

PLATE 44



Matisse

Dahlias and Pomegranates (1947)
(Brush and ink, $30\frac{1}{8}'' \times 22\frac{1}{4}''$; Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund)—Page 35

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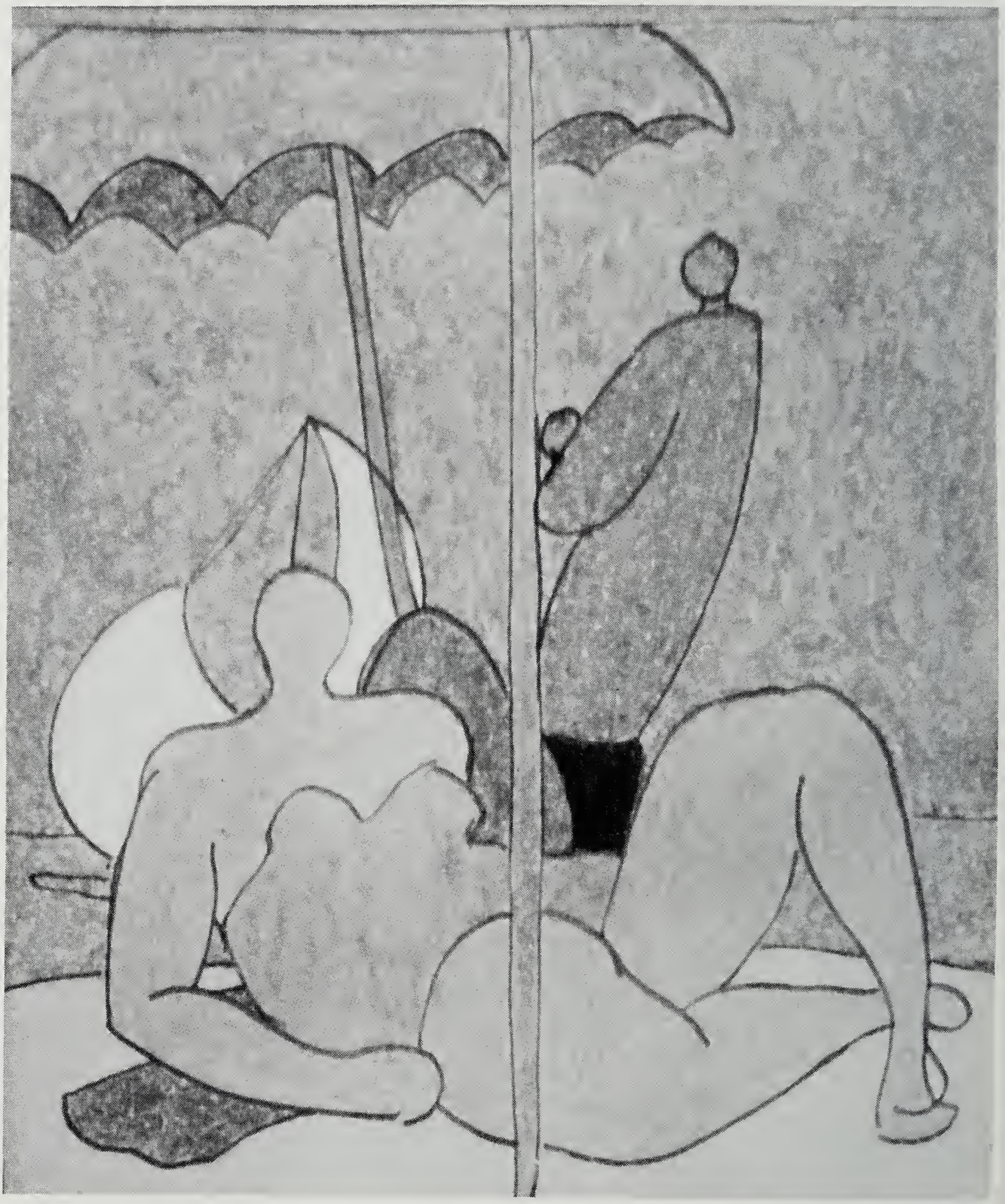
Matisse

Detail from left section of *The Three Sisters* (Plate 77)
—Page 27

PLATE 46



Barton Church

On the Beach III
(Study for verso of wings of *Pastoral* [Plate 61]. Collection, the artist's)—Page 6

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Picasso

Girl in a Yellow Hat
(Formerly Chrysler Collection.
Present ownership unknown)—Page 26

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Annunciation
—Page 10

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Van Gogh

Thatches in the Sunshine (Reminiscence of the North)
—Page 10

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Child's Bonnet
(Privately owned)—Page 20 ftn

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Head of Actor
—Page 26

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Vermeer

The Little Street
(Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam)—Page 40

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Redon

The Large Green Vase
(Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
Bequest of John T. Spaulding)—Page 29

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Madame Charpentier and Her Children
(Metropolitan Museum of Art,
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Renoir

Group of Bathers
—Page 9 ftn

Renoir

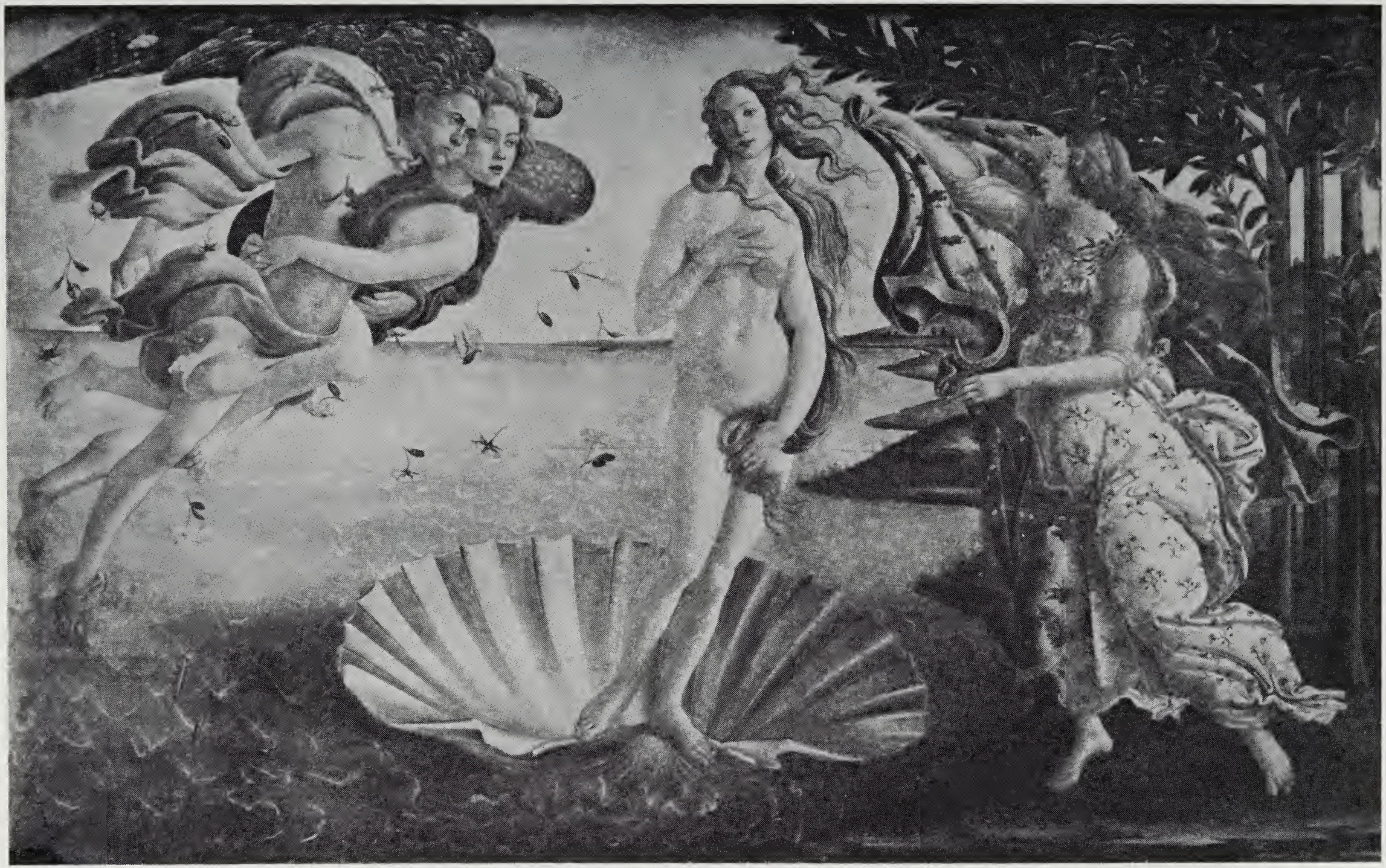
Bathing Group
—Pages 9–10. 9 ftn

Renoir

Antibes
—Page 38

Renoir

Bathers



Botticelli

The Birth of Venus
(Galleria degli Uffizi,
Florence)—Pages 9–10

Barton Church

Pastoral
(Collection, the artist's—Reproduced by permission of Rutgers University Art Gallery, New Brunswick, New Jersey)—Page 6

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Greek Landscape
—Page 31 ftn

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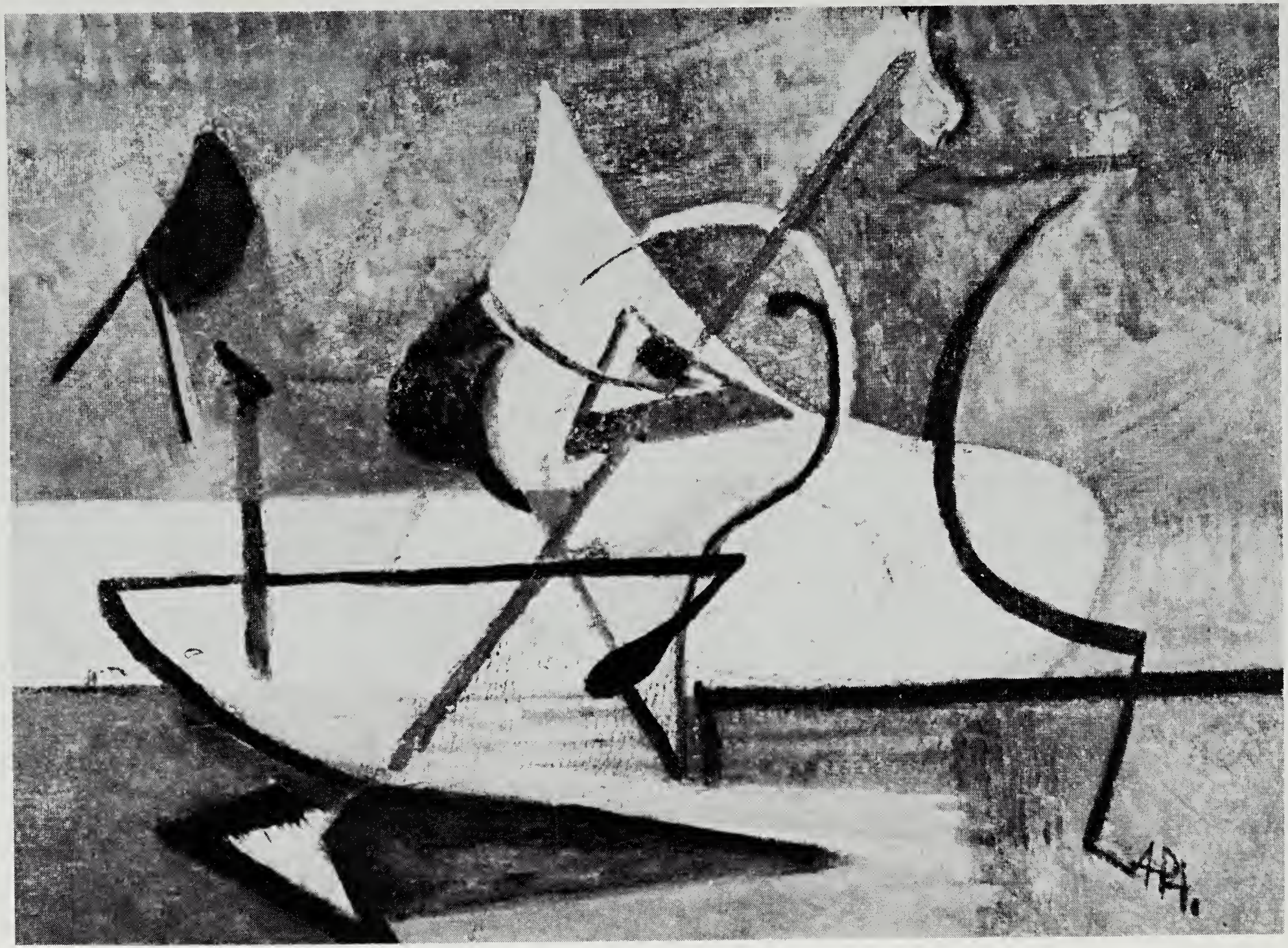
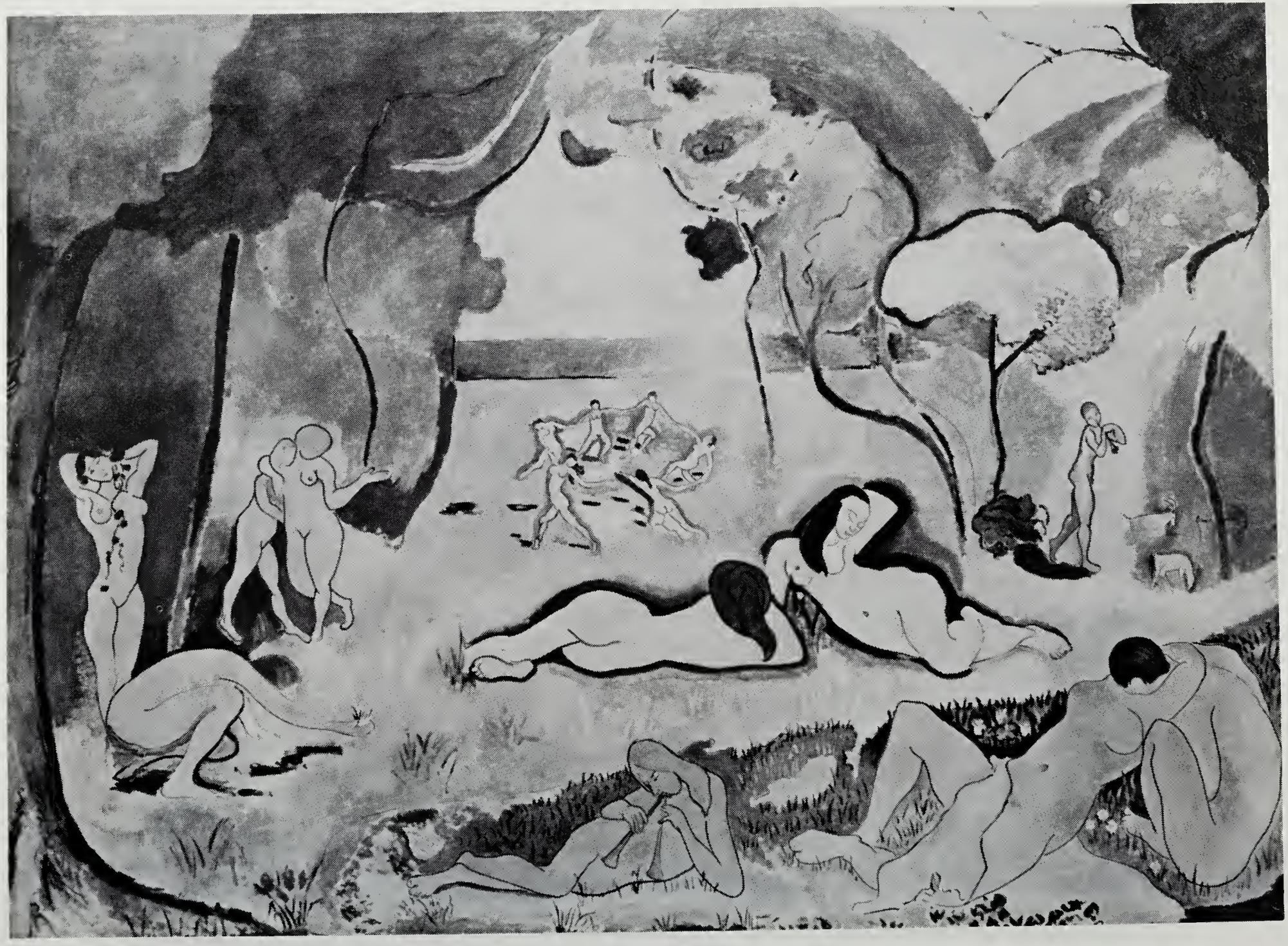
Violette de Mazia

A Necklace of Boats
—Pages 4–5



Abraham Hankins

The Ocean
—Pages 5–6, 7



Matisse

The Joy of Life
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French, fifteenth century

Pietà
—Page 10

Fragonard

Music Lesson
(Louvre, Paris)

Vuillard

The Vuillard Family at Lunch
(Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Ralph F. Colin, New York)—Page 14

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Dinner Table

(Stavros S. Niarchos Collection) — Pages 14, 17, 24

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Fruit and Tapestry
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The Bar at the Folies Bergère
(The Courtauld Institute Galleries,
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Picasso

Guernica
(On extended loan to the Museum of Modern Art, NewYork, from the estate of the artist)—Pages 5, 46–47, 46–47 ftn

Matisse

The Three Sisters
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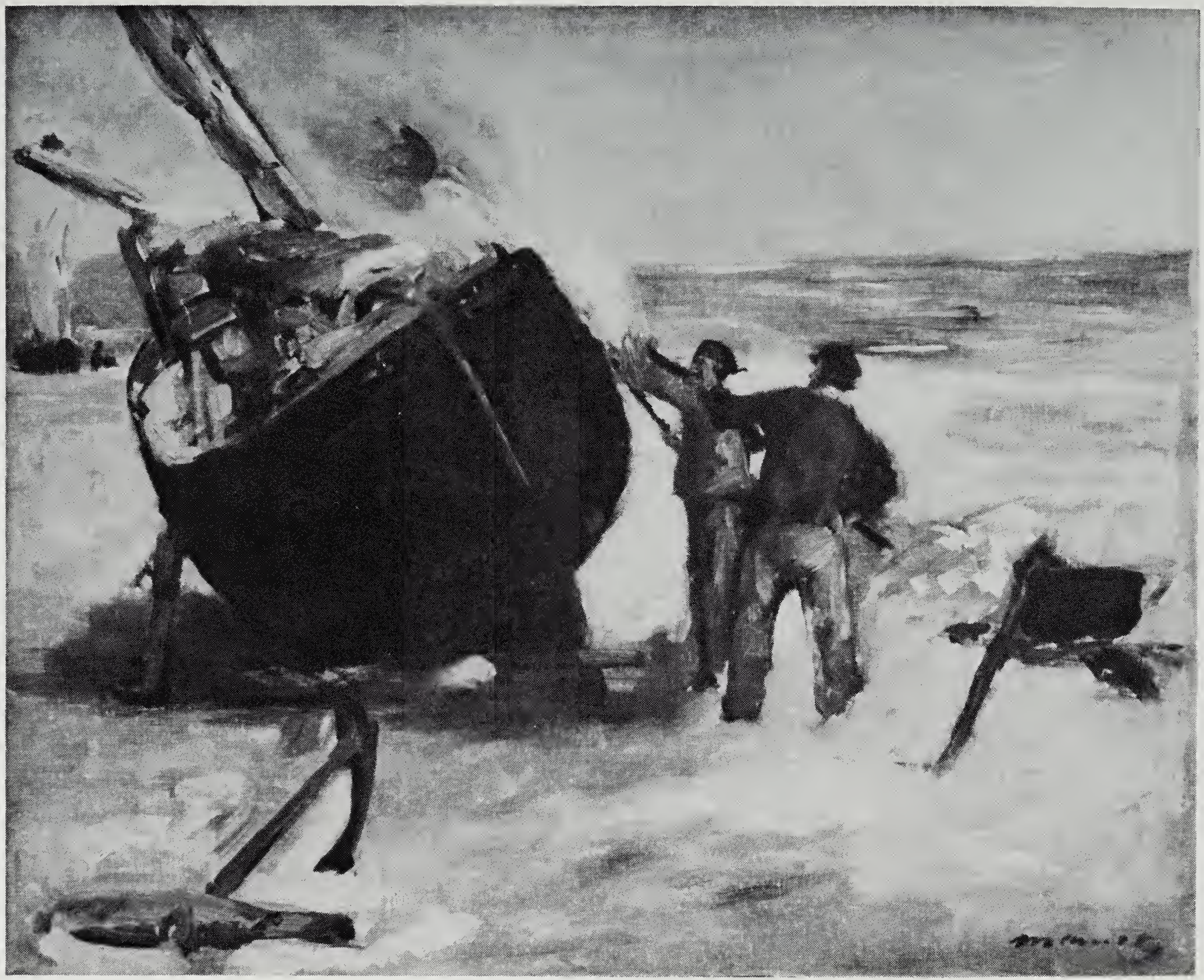

Manet

Men Tarring Boat
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Still Life with Lemon

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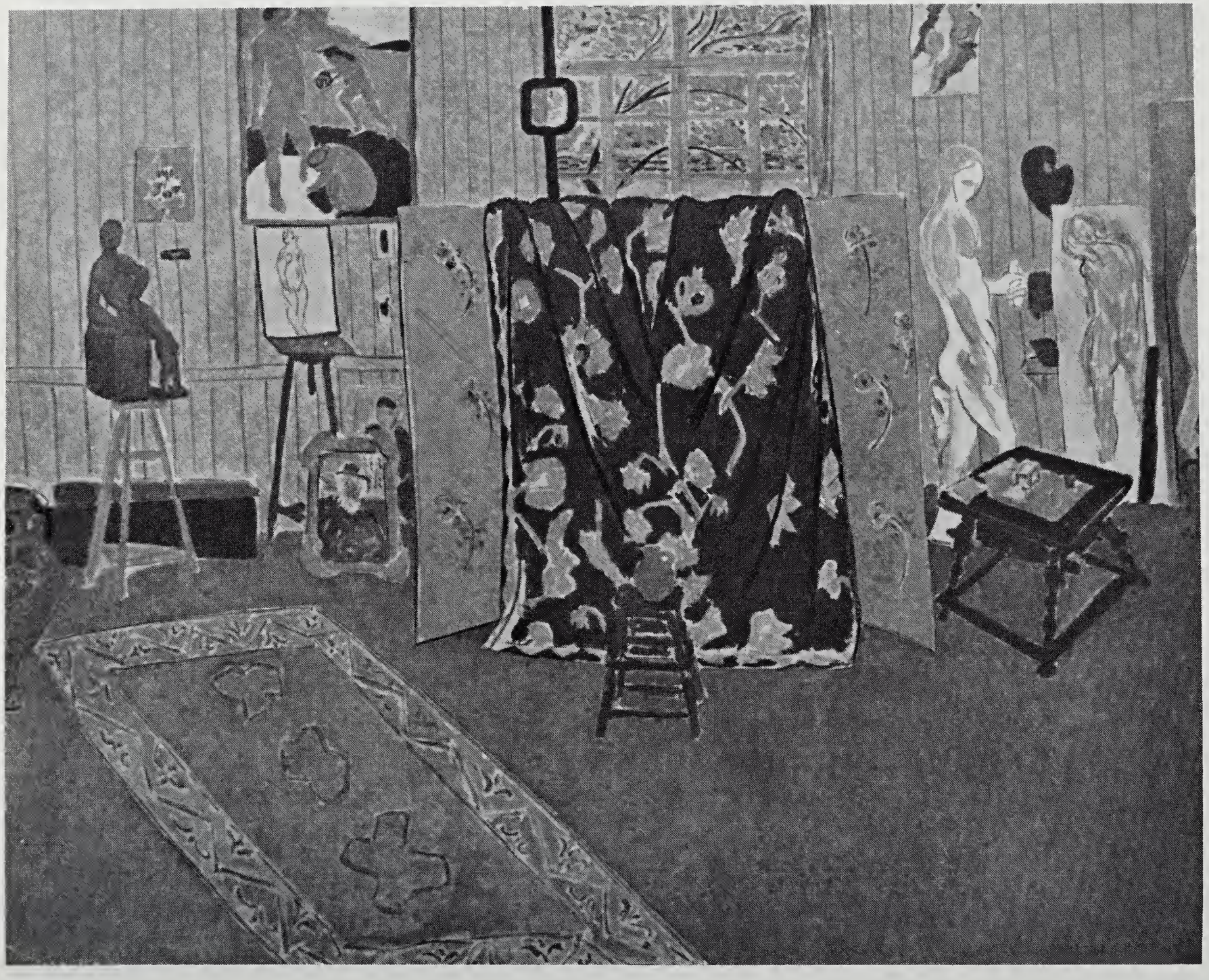


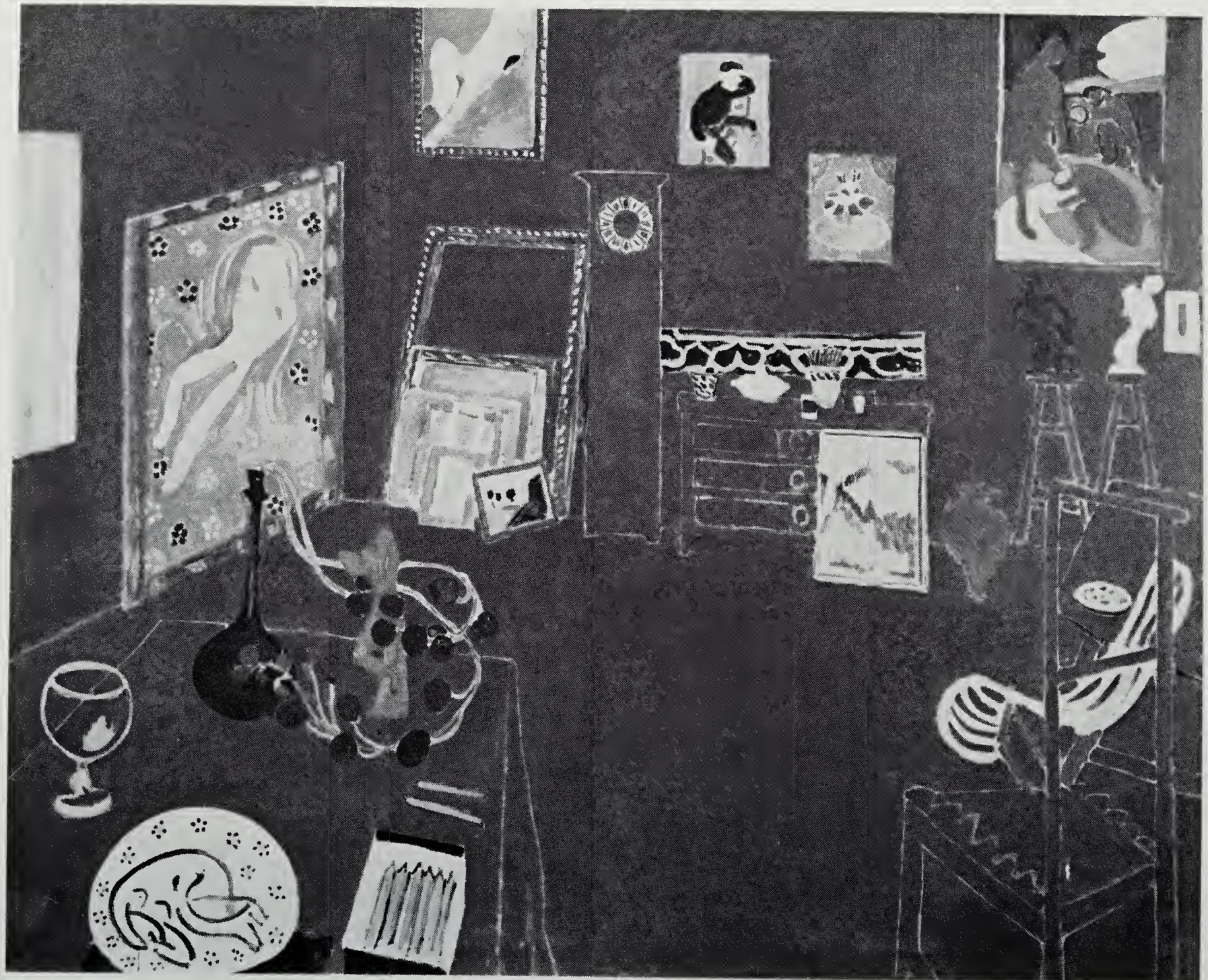
Matisse

Studio

(Present ownership uncertain)—Page 20

Renoir

Luncheon
—Page 14



Matisse

Red Studio (1911)
(Oil on canvas 71¼″ × 7′ 2¼″–Collection, The

Renoir

Luncheon of the Boating Party
(The Phillips Collection,
Washington, D.C.)—Page 14

Matisse

Dinner Table—Harmony in Red

(Present ownership uncertain)—Pages 17–19, 19 ftn, 22, 23 ftn, 31 ftn, 36

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Bird on Branch
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Matisse

Girl and Screen

Boucher

Madame de Pompadour
(National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh)—Page 32

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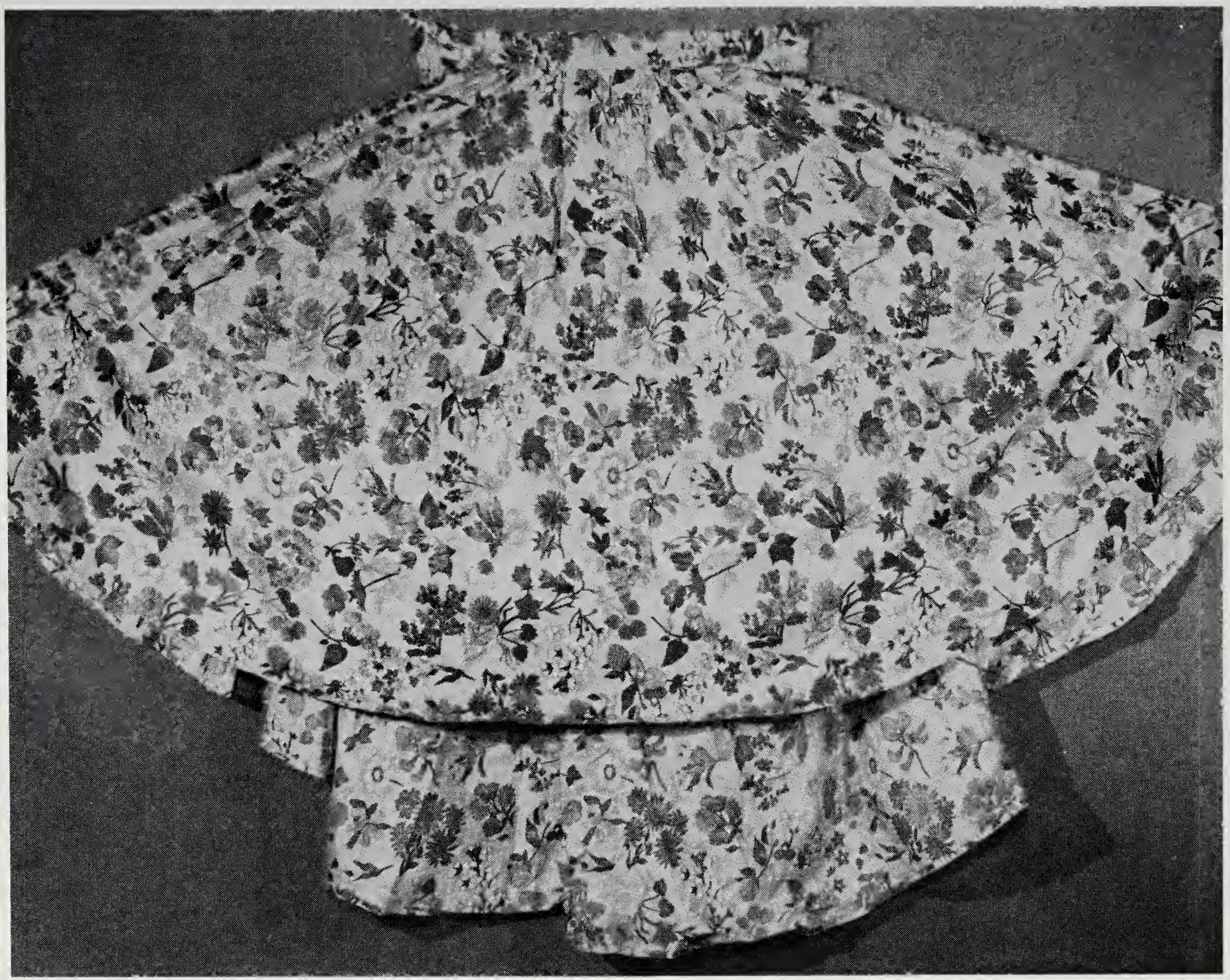
Chinese Casket
—Pages 31–33, 31 ftn



Modern

Flowered chintz
(Privately owned)—Page 32

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Cretonne
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French, c. 1500

The Promenade
(Cluny Museum, Paris. Photograph, Musées Nationaux, Paris)—Page 32

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Acanthi
(Private Collection, Ernst Beyeler,
Galerie Beyeler, Zurich)—Pages 36–37

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The Pearl
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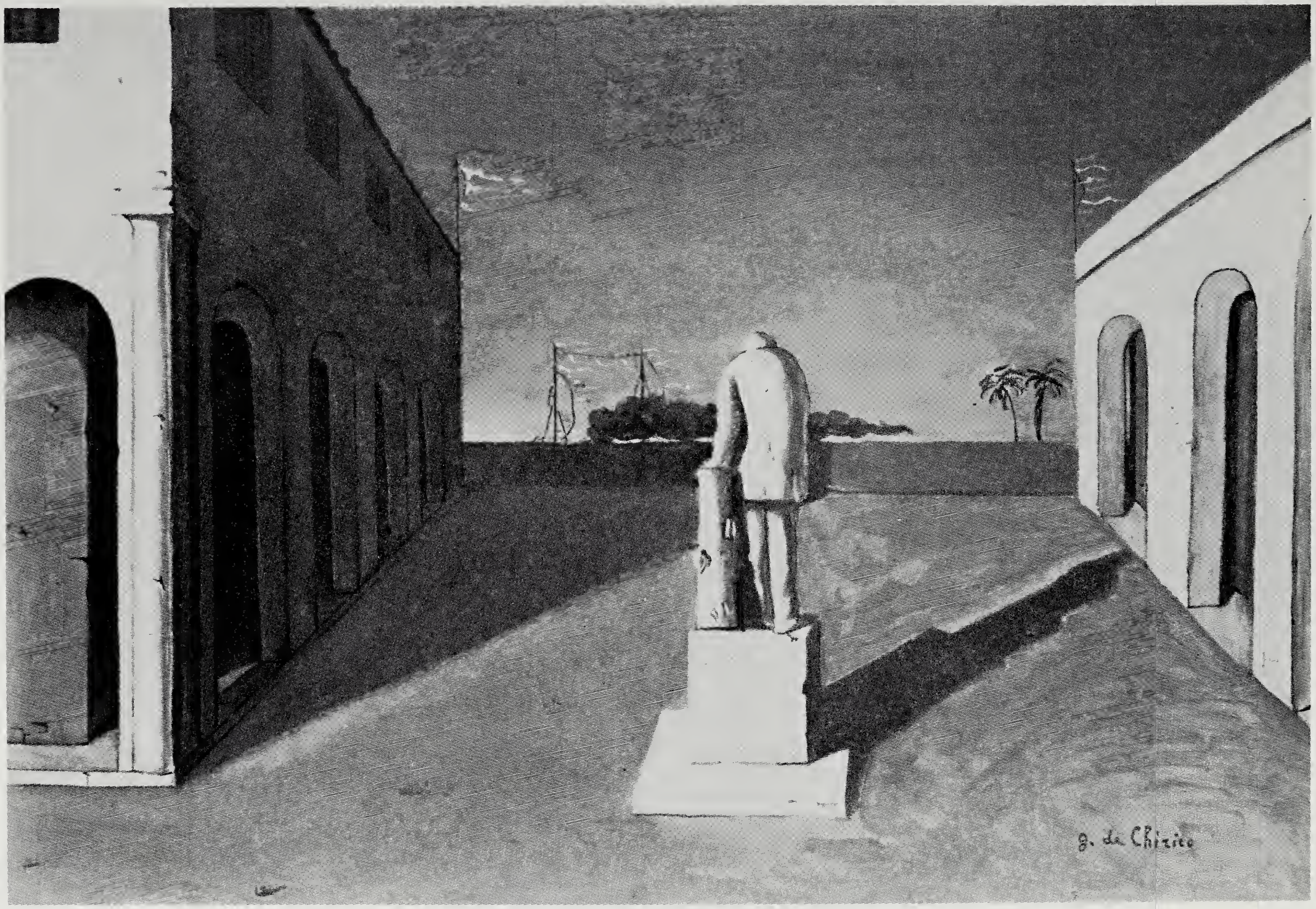

De Chirico

Plaza
—Page 40

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Raoul Dufy

Three Musicians
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Southern Scene
—Page 40

Corot

House and Factory of M. Henry
(Philadelphia Museum of Art:
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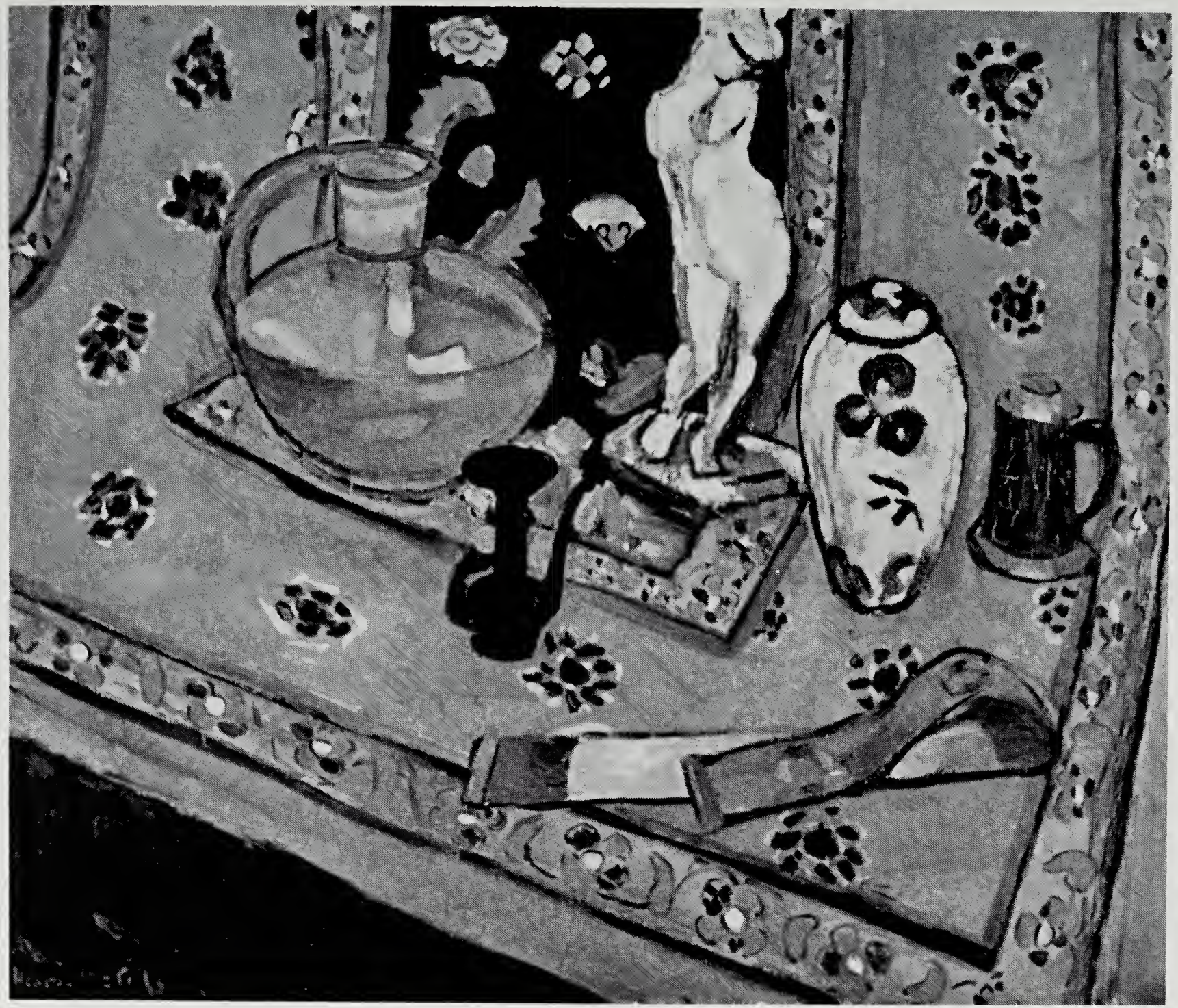
Jean Hugo

French Village
—Page 40



Matisse

Still Life on Red Rug
(Present ownership uncertain)—Page 20 ftn

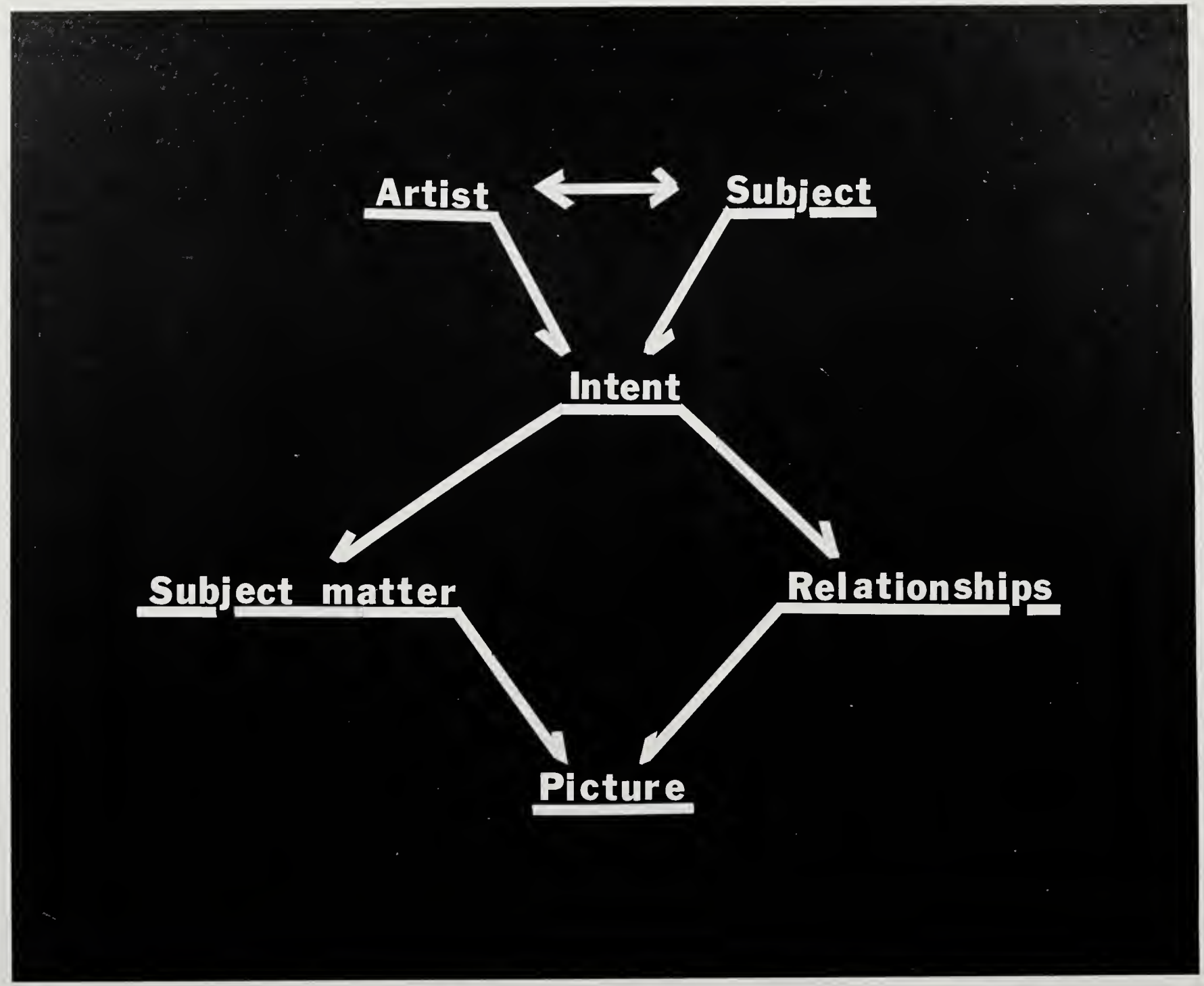


Diagram of creative process
—Page 48 ftn

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